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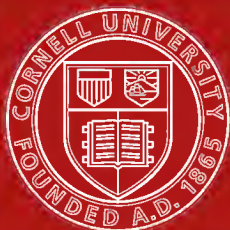
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# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

Francis G. N. D. S.

pages 50.- 108- 155.

*Letters From a  
Liaison Officer*  
by  
*Ferdinand Frazier Gelke*



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*MCMXIX*

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A. 969027

## TO MY MOTHER

Whose love, complete understanding, sympathetic and devoted interest, more than all other factors combined, sustained and encouraged me through the trying and unfamiliar demands of my War-time sojourn "Over There," I lovingly dedicate this little volume of experiences.

FERD.

New York,  
Nineteen Hundred  
and Nineteen.



## FOREWORD

It goes without saying that the letters here gathered were not written with any idea of being permanently preserved. They were merely a progressive recital, in a most informal and unstudied vein, of circumstances and scenes with which the writer came in touch in the course of his work, first in the ranks of the Marine Corps, and afterward as a Lieutenant of Infantry in the Liaison Service, in France.

But since the author's return from "Over There"—and in view of the gigantic scale of World War and the epochal character of the events and situations touched upon in the correspondence—members of his family have urged that the series of letters written from the scenes of his activities during 1917-'19, be made into a handy volume for the use of such friends as may find in them some personal appeal and interest.

In preparing the letters for publication an attempt has been made to omit the more private and intimate details, while retaining such of the descriptive text as would aid the reader in gaining some lasting impressions of the scenes and incidents which rushed by, like an animated pano-

rama, in those days of frenzied endeavor and kaleidoscopic change, beginning shortly after America's entrance into the war and continuing until after the signing of the Armistice, and the return of the writer to America, early in 1919.

Nothing has been added to the original text, except names of places and certain military data which could not be included at the time, though much has been eliminated. It has been the purpose to preserve only so much detail as would be essential to a proper understanding of the situations described, and there is, of course, absolutely no attempt at literary style or impressive presentation.

F. F. J.

May,  
Nineteen Hundred  
and Nineteen.





*Ferdinand D. Jelke*



French Army Corps Staff brass is worn at all formal functions and when transacting formal official business throughout the Region.

## MILITARY RECORD

FERDINAND F. JELKE

Enlisted, 5th Regiment (Base Battalion)  
U. S. Marine Corps, July 14, 1917, at Wash-  
ington, D. C.

Sailed for France on U. S. S. Henderson,  
August 3, 1917, acting as interpreter.

Promoted August 17, 1917, to Corporal,  
U. S. Marine Corps.

Attached to War Risk Bureau (Paris),  
November 4, 1917.

Attached to Chief Liaison Officer (Paris),  
February 12, 1918.

Commissioned Second Lieutenant, U. S.  
Infantry, March 17, 1918.

Attached to staff of Commanding Gen-  
eral, Fifth French Army Corps, as Liaison  
Officer, April 27, 1918, in which capacity I  
served until after the signing of the armis-  
tice, December 12, 1918.

Landed at New York, U. S. S. Sierra,  
March 6, 1919.

Discharged from service March 8, 1919,  
at Camp Dix, N. J.



U. S. S. HENDERSON

*At Sea, August 19th, 1917.*

THIS is another tranquil August day, when nature seems to be at peace with the entire world. The trip has been uneventful, with the exception of hard work, drilling, holystoning the decks and long hours for the men—really a fine lot who enlisted for patriotic reasons last April. They are from small towns and farms in almost every state in the Union—one hundred and fifty from the University of Minnesota, all in one company. It was said at the Philadelphia Navy Yard that this is the best bunch of recruits that has gone to France. For three days we have been in the War Zone, but no one is worried, and gives it little serious thought. Every known precaution is taken, dozens of men on the superstructure constantly are on watch with field glasses. The gun crews for the six-inch guns are on duty day and night, relieved every four hours. Fire and emergency drills are held daily, frequently during the night.

As we came in sight of land, early this morning, the bugle sounded General Quar-

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*At Sea,  
Aug. 19th,  
1917.*

ters, and every one rushed to their stations at double-quick. The convoy spread out, commenced maneuvering and circling, and the guns started booming at objects between the ships; aeroplanes circled overhead like birds, dropping high explosive bombs. We were in the midst of a flotilla of submarines, our first engagement with the enemy. As the cannons roared and belched, the ship quivered so violently fourteen windows in the officers' mess were broken.

One submarine was sunk.

Lots of love, from  
FERD.

*Bordeaux, France, Sept. 20th, 1917.*



HAVE an opportunity this morning to drop you a few lines, good paper with American pen and ink, which is quite a treat.

Until within the past week I have been living under such rough conditions, on shipboard and in camp, the life of an enlisted man, there has been little opportunity to write, except to scratch a few lines home.

Colonel Bearss has been put in command of the largest receiving port in France where the greater part of the new National Army will be landed, and the work of preparing to handle them is most interesting. There is already a large receiving camp at Souges and it is to be enlarged to accommodate forty thousand. There are to be over five hundred thousand men, two hundred and fifty thousand animals, and hundreds of thousands of tons of freight landed here.\* There are to be miles of railroads, warehouses and docks built.

We landed a month ago at St. Nazaire, where about one-fourth of the American

\*Estimated to be half of the proposed American Army.

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Bordeaux, France,  
Sept. 20th,  
1917.*

Army is to be handled. About ten days ago Colonel Bearss, with a staff of six officers, three interpreters (Le Gendre, Auguste Ferrier of New Orleans, and myself) motored down from St. Nazaire to take charge of Base Section No. 2. We have requisitioned a large four-story office building and there are to be, in all, about eighty officers\* and two to three hundred clerks.

It is the opportunity of our lives to witness and be part of the advance of a great army. Our services as interpreters have really been valuable. This is most interesting work, as it brings us in contact with the highest staff officers. As you know, Colonel Bearss is a field man, and has a long fighting record in the tropics, including Santo Domingo and the Philippines.

None of the American troops are to do any fighting before spring. They are to be sent to training camps behind the lines as fast as they arrive, and the work consists largely of bomb throwing, bayonet exercises, machine gun operation and athletics to harden them. The infantry fighting is all done with machine guns, bayonets and bombs. One hundred and eighty-seven troops of our Fifth Regiment were killed and wounded recently in their camps at the front by German aeroplane bombs.

\*There are now five times this number.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

The French rarely discuss the possibilities of the termination of the war, as they have lost hope of it ever ending and just grimly keep on fighting. The press is silent on the subject. The United States is taking over a large part of France and is expected to be her savior. The general feeling among our officers is that the war is to last at least one or even two years longer.

Our letters are censored by our own officers, and are again subject to examination by the Base Censor at Paris.

Affectionately,

FERD.

*Bordeaux, France,  
Sept. 20th,  
1917.*

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Bordeaux, France, Oct. 26th, 1917.*



WAR makes one a fatalist in a short time, for they have little control over their destinies, and are tossed about "as jetsam on the waves of time."

The Antilles, one of the five ships in our convoy, was sunk on her second return voyage to America. The Saxonia, another, has also been sunk on a return trip.\*

I have had several very interesting days this week, in spite of almost incessant rain. I was detailed to conduct the Paris New York Herald correspondent, Cleveland Cox, on a two days' tour of inspection of the camps and engineer works of this Base Section No. 2, and secured interviews for him with the various Colonels commanding Departments, and many others.

The whole trip was most instructive and interesting. Cox had just returned from the front where our men are in training in the Vosges. This is a most poverty-stricken part of France, while at the same time the quietest, and the men are quartered in cow-sheds, pig-pens and peasant huts, and the mud and dirt is deep and the odors most

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\*This was at a period when the submarine menace was at its worst.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

offensive. So near the lines they can't live in barracks or tents.

I am astonished to read in the American press that the Germans are practically on their knees, begging peace. The fact is, the subject is rarely mentioned in the French papers, and then only vaguely. Cox said the middle classes want peace at any price, and if they had their choice would not fight for another year, even to secure victory with our help.

He said recently, when some German prisoners were taken and their officers told that Americans were here, they laughed, thinking it a lie. When shown the Americans, they evidenced the greatest concern, and said, "Well, we have been deceived."

Yesterday we took a wandering American, wearing a soldier's uniform, who is to be court-martialed as a spy. He had ten thousand francs sewed up in the lining of his coat.

It is fine to receive such letters and to know the folks at home appreciate us and give us a little blarney. It warms the cockles of the heart, for it is all so sordid over here.

With lots of love to you all, from

FERD.

*Bordeaux, France,  
Oct. 26th,  
1917.*

*Tours, France, Nov. 3d, 1917.*

**B**EFORE leaving Bordeaux, I had charge of the polls and held the New York State election.

Well, the life of a marine is filled with excitement. Last night Hennen Le Gendre and I narrowly escaped being killed in an automobile accident. I had been ordered to Paris to help in organizing the War Risk Bureau. We did not "push off" from Bordeaux in the Packard until noon Saturday and were ordered to report in Paris Sunday, four hundred miles. We had no time to change the oil in the motor for the trip, and the car was heating and making poor time; so after lunch we stopped and washed out the motor with kerosene and put in fresh oil.

Hennen was driving and we were trying to reach Tours, halfway, to spend the night. The motor ran smoothly like a watch, and we had just finished one hundred and twenty-five miles in three and one-half hours, through towns and all.

It was already dark, and the headlights had dimmers, but the road was perfect. I had just looked at the speedometer and it registered forty-five miles. The next instant the road took a sudden turn under a

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

railroad bridge; there was a terrific crash, and the car rolled over, apparently crushed and a total wreck. It had struck the rock curbing at the side of the country road and capsized, crushing top, fenders, running board, left front wheel, and windshield into a thousand pieces. It was a miracle that we were not killed, and the only thing that saved our lives was that the car was of such substantial construction. A lighter one would have crumpled like cardboard and have rolled over and crushed us. The steel fenders which struck the soft, wet earth were completely crushed. The impact was terrific, but so sudden we hadn't time to see it coming. I was thrown over Hennen and lit on my feet and thought at first his legs were pinned under the car. Hennen walked to the next town and asked help, but everyone was in bed (at eight o'clock), and flatly refused. Finally three teamsters with their large, lumbering carts passed and helped lift the car. The left front wheel would still turn, and after refilling her with oil and gasoline (of which we had an extra supply in the tonneau) and water, all of which had run out, we started again for Tours. We limped in, in a badly crippled condition after one a. m. and found caressing beds with clean sheets.

*Tours, France,  
Nov. 3d,  
1917.*

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Tours, France,  
Nov. 3d,  
1917.*

Upon remarking the unusual number of cripples hobbling about the streets on crutches, we were informed that a large amputation hospital is situated here.

This is the first touch of la belle France in eleven weeks, and it is the first time the people in the streets have been friendly, or the hotel employees respectful and polite, or that we have slept in good beds. The Americans are not too cordially welcomed, as it is thought we will prolong the war without making any material difference in the result.\*

Tours, you know, is in the heart of Touraine, the beautiful and far-famed Châteaueau district, one hundred and fifty miles southwest of Paris, so much visited by tourists. It is a refined and beautiful residential city, with fine buildings, miles of old shade trees, and beautiful perspectives,

Your devoted son,

FERD.

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\*This condition changed in the summer of 1918.

*Paris, France, Nov. 16th, 1917.*



US telephoned several days ago that there was a whole wagon-load of mail for me at Headquarters, including your love letters, all of which I was delighted to receive and am still in the process of digesting.

We finished our motor trip from Tours without further mishap—arriving at Paris, after a 400-mile trip, Tuesday evening in a pouring rain and looking like two soldiers direct from the trenches, with our “packs.” I am glad to say that the Ritz received us with open arms and the greatest courtesies in spite of our appearance, which was an unusual experience, after three months of incivility and condescension by the ignorant people of the Midi.

We were flabbergasted to find Paris just as gay as ever, only more so, on the surface; with the exception of the night life—all of the restaurants close promptly at 9:30 and every one quietly goes home with no arguments about serving “just one more drink.” The theaters are all open. I had expected to see a martial spirit with war-stained detachments of troops passing through the streets with trucks, cannons, and torn flags, drums and bugles. The stenog-

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Paris, France,  
Nov. 16th,  
1917.*

rapher says it was that way in the beginning, at the time of the battle of the Marne, and that it was awful when the Germans were so near Paris and the Government was moved to Bordeaux for two months. They could hear the roar of cannon. The papers, at that time, referred to the salvation of Paris at the Marne as a "miracle."

Everyone on the streets looks healthy, pleasant, gay and well dressed, not all in mourning as at Bordeaux. However, when one enters French homes, they find hearts torn with sorrow, mourning over their lost ones. These people are really Spartans.

In spite of the high price and scarcity of gasoline, the Government allows taxi-cabs a limited quantity, so this means of conveyance is not extinct; except on rainy days and late at night when it is utterly impossible to get one. The rates seem little higher than usual.

We dined at Henri's and had a devil of a time getting home afterwards, at ten o'clock, and finally succeeded in recruiting an old man with a horse-cab to drive us up to the Bois de Boulogne.

There is so much to write about and my mind is in such a whirl, and I am always in such a hurry, I forget to say the principal things I started to write. It is so tedious and difficult dictating to French stenog-

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

raphers as almost every word must be spelled, and it takes too much time to write long-hand.

You all are hardly ever entirely off my mind, and my one ambition is to make you proud of me; our constant interest is "to please the folks at home." There is no one among ourselves we care about impressing.

We are enjoying immensely our respite of luxury, if not of ease, and Gus and I are thinking of writing a book entitled "From the Clay Hills of Quantico\* to the Paved Streets of Paris."

Lovingly,  
FERD.

*Paris, France,  
Nov. 16th,  
1917.*

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\*One of the three Marine Corps Training Camps is at Quantico, Virginia.

*Paris, France, Dec. 3d, 1917.*



HAVE just had a totally new viewpoint on the prospects of peace in conversing with the Vicomtesse de Rancongne, who, you know, is my old friend Giselle Bunau-Varilla, daughter of the Panama engineer and owner of the "Matin," Philip Bunau-Varilla. She is a brilliant, patriotic young woman, thoroly posted on the war and French politics, and her views naturally reflect those of her father and the inner circle of the French Government. Instead of expressing regret at the turn of affairs in Russia and their making a separate move for peace, she showed satisfaction, saying that it would "break the ice," to use her own words, and the move she thought would be contagious. There is a deep and longing desire in the hearts of all fighting men on both sides for peace and for the carnage to stop. This is not limited to any set of men or women, but is universal among all nationalities in the trenches, who want to return to their homes and peaceful pursuits. She says she knows on the highest authority that the Kaiser and the men around him are sincerely willing and want peace at any price; but they have in the

past so thoroughly sowed the doctrine of Pan-Germanism and "Deutschland ueber Alles," and have so completely led the people to believe they were going to have a victorious peace, they cannot now convince them that Germany is facing a crushing defeat. With the German Army holding so much foreign territory, the "Pan-Germanists" refuse to consent to "peace at any price." There is a great wave of the brotherhood-love-of-mankind passing through the armies of Europe, and she believes that all that is needed is the present move for peace in Russia to fan it into flame. There is a general feeling of the futility of continuing this awful carnage of human lives. Instead of condemning the Russians, she says they are showing great hardihood in making a move that all nations wish to make, but do not dare, for fear of not "saving their faces."

This is to me an entirely new angle on the situation, and coming so frankly from this source illustrates what the Government and people are striving for, but have not yet been able to attain.

Last Sunday, we called on the Vicomtesse's father, in their magnificent big old house in the Avenue d'Iéna, and had a delightful visit. We felt instinctively that we were in the presence of one of the great

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Dec. 3d,  
1917.*

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Paris, France,  
Dec. 3d,  
1917.*

men of France. The house was just the same as of old, but a little dingy and the walls in need of cleaning, showing the occupants had had little time or inclination for such things during the past three years. Colonel Bunau-Varilla, the great French engineer, was just home from the hospital where he had laid in a mangled condition for three months. One leg and part of his side were shot away by an exploding shrapnel shell. He was in high spirits and gay, because Etienne, his son, who had been a prisoner since the first nine months of the war, was returning the next day. The boy, whom I had motored with and chummed with the entire summer of 1912, at Dinard, had won the Croix de Guerre three times (two palms) in the first nine months of the war, before his capture. When captured he was leading, as flight commander, a flight of aeroplanes making a raid on a German camp. He was for five months in solitary confinement in a German prison, the first month of which he was not permitted to even work. After that he was allowed to sew "trench-backs" for ten hours per day. He was moved from camp to camp and suffered the most frightful starvation and hardships. The "Matin" has been very anti-German for twenty-five years past, and this was their means of revenge. They

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did likewise with the sons of other prominent Frenchmen as reprisals. At one time when the French were making raids on a German ammunition plant the Germans placed sixty of these young men in a house nearby and left a light burning in it each night to attract the bombing attacks. It was the only light in the neighborhood.

Finally, in an almost dying condition, through the intercession of the King of Spain, he was sent to Switzerland. After six months the doctors there have permitted him to return home, with the understanding with the French Government that he must return to Germany after the war to be tried by court martial for some trivial offense for which the sentence is ten years in prison.

The Vicomtesse's young husband of less than a year was also captured in the beginning of the war, when a handful of one thousand French cavalry held Lille against ten thousand Germans for three days. This blocked their advance on Calais, and gave the French time to send up more troops to cut the Germans off from ever reaching Calais.

Giselle, herself really only a girl of twenty-five, with two other young women organized the "Appui des Belges" (Help for Belgian Soldiers) at the beginning of the

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Dec. 3d,  
1917.*

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*Paris, France,  
Dec. 3d,  
1917.*

war, and now have an institution which takes care of a German prison camp of over five thousand Belgian soldiers, sending to each, by post, a weekly package of food individually addressed, and spends over eight thousand dollars per month, most of which is contributed by the French Government.

Etienne's cousin Jean, who was such a good friend, whom Jack and I met crossing to China, is broken in health and has been sent back to civil life as a *réformé*, and is living in retirement with his wife and two children at St. Cloud.

This letter as I read it sounds sad, but there is nothing unusual about it, simply an every-day account of one prominent French family torn by the war. Is there any wonder these people welcome the prospect of peace, the demand for which will some day sweep over Europe like an electric spark?

Devotedly,

FERD.

*Paris, France, Dec. 22nd, 1917.*



THE time is flying by so rapidly and we are so extremely busy it is almost impossible to write, although I am writing you in mind every day. Occasionally when I leave the office and do have an opportunity to dictate a few lines to a public stenographer, I am in too great a hurry to collect my thoughts.

The spirit of military men is "to eat, drink and be gay for to-morrow we may die" and the result is that they all live as well as possible on meager means. Life in camp and in the trenches is so severe that every one lives as comfortably as possible when they get the opportunity. The result is that Gus and I have taken a beautifully furnished apartment near the Bois de Boulogne, expecting to spend the winter here. It was comical to see us moving in our worn uniforms and rough camp equipment with blanket rolls and sea-bags; we felt like a couple of tramps in an Aladdin's Dream.

We frequently have officers up to dinner, our only diversion, as we never go to the theater.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Paris, France,  
Dec. 22nd,  
1917.*

While it is unknown to the average American, the situation is looked upon by the French authorities as serious, as it is estimated that the number of men that we are figuring on sending over by Spring will not be enough to offset the German soldiers released on the Russian front—France was in a better position in 1915 than at the present day, when Germany has since conquered Russia and Italy.

Germany is preparing on a large scale to make air raids on Paris before Spring and it is expected that we will get a taste of war here.

Love from your devoted son,

FERD.

*Paris, France, Dec. 26th, 1917.*



WELL, this is the day after Christmas, which was passed really pleasantly under the circumstances. The festivities commenced with dinner Christmas Eve at Harriet and Florence Burton's apartment and ended at midnight last night at ours.

They gave a charming dinner and had a small tree. The guests included a Colonel Riley, Lisa Stillman, Baroness Maxwell de Wardener, Gus, myself and several others.

We went over again for Christmas dinner when they had Colonel McCrae, former Vice-President of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Mimi Scott, besides several more. In the afternoon we went for a long motor drive in the Bois, and in the evening the girls went down to the Soldiers' and Sailors' Club, where they assisted with giving out the presents.

Am enclosing a clipping about the Secours Duryea which you see Florence Burton was Secretary of and one of the prime movers. She is a close friend of Col. and Mrs. House with whom she was constantly when last in Paris several weeks ago. I am also enclosing a clipping in regard to

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Paris, France,  
Dec. 26th,  
1917.*

“embalmed beef” from which we suffered when crossing the ocean.

There is so little heat and the houses are so cold that we have to dress indoors as if we were out-of-doors. Coal is fifty dollars per ton and can only be secured in limited small quantities by the use of coal cards, as is also the case with wood, sugar, bread, gasoline, and milk. However, we don't buy or use any milk, leaving it for the sick and babies. We have gas in our kitchen, but only a limited amount is permitted to be used. By paying the price one can have plenty of everything good to eat, for the French certainly know how to cook. The one thing that a soldier thinks about is his stomach for the life makes him ravenously hungry and he rarely has enough.\*

Your devoted brother,  
FERD.

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\*Of what he wants.

*Paris, France, Jan. 21st, 1918.*



JUST a few lines this eve, to let you know I am well and happy and working very hard, but too tired to write much. I never have an opportunity to dictate letters any more, as we are working in and around Paris, writing insurance for the soldiers and trying to get it all in by February 12th, the last day. We are working in the hospitals at present and it is all very interesting. I am directly under and working with Captain Willard Mack of Cincinnati, who is charming. We have been all day at Dr. Blake's hospital. It is one of the best, and he is a kindly, elderly man with white hair, looking sixty-five, but they say fifty-five. He is considered one of the foremost surgeons of France to-day, especially on fractures and difficult grafting. He has the rank of Major, as all American Red Cross hospitals have been taken over by the Army. Preparations for American hospitals are being made all over France on a staggering scale.

We had cold weather here from about December 15th to January 15th, and chilblains are frequent, but for the past

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Paris, France,  
Jan. 21st,  
1918.*

week it has been warm and spring-like. Deaths from pneumonia have occurred by dozens daily.

The following amusing copy of a letter giving an enlisted man's honest impressions upon reaching the front for the first time in winter, was received from a friend who later was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, for bravery in action.

"This is a hell of a hole—mud up to my ears—snow—slush—men sleeping in stables—cow sheds, pig sties—no oil for lights—no wood for fires. Hell itself let loose. We can hear the damn guns on the front all day and night—like distant thunder.

"Companies are now 250 men—everybody has a helmet, gas mask, etc., on account of bombs—gas bombs, etc.

"We expect to occupy the trenches in the . . . in about three weeks. I kiss you lovingly good-bye.

"Fell in a mud-hole to-night and had to be dug out so am feeling in no cheerful state of mind. Enjoy reading Town Topics and Country Life. Don't believe any such country as America exists—Long Island and New York must be fables.

"My address is . . .

"Was very glad to see you and Gus in Paris.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

"This will be mailed by a guy who is going to Paris to-morrow morning.

"Best to you and Gus."

While Channon's newspaper letter is cleverly and charmingly written, mothers and daughters are not flitting about Paris on the arms of their sons and brothers. He has let his imagination run away with him in order to write an airy and amusing account of something that is quite the opposite.

Affectionately,

FERD.

*Paris, France,  
Jan. 21st,  
1918.*

*Paris, France, Feb. 12th, 1918.*



YOU will remember I wrote you two months ago of the contemplated air raids on Paris by the Germans with air-planes of fantastic size. Last week they made the first of the long privately expected attacks. The sirens made a devil of a row at 11:30—like on an old-fashioned New Year's Eve at home. I laid on my bed and waited for the explosions as the sirens passed the house on fast motors to awake people to seek shelter in cellars. Finally I got up and went on the balcony. The hand of death and destruction hovered over the sleeping city, nobody knowing where it would strike nor where the bombs would fall. One by one the few remaining lights in the neighboring houses disappeared and all was shrouded in darkness with the exception of a few stars and a pale moon. The deep intonations of falling bombs and cannons were intermingled. I counted fifty explosions in a space of about twenty minutes. I dropped to sleep again at midnight and at 2:30 was awakened by bugles and bugles—indicating "all's quiet." One bomb dropped around the corner from Dr. Blake's hospital, which is located about a block from our apartment. Another

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

destroyed the upper stories and blew out the front of a heavy stone building nearby, in the Avenue des Grandes Armées.

A French air-plane was brought down on the Place de la Concorde, the aviator having been shot through the head and, the mechanic attempting to land, the machine caught on one of the lamp-posts in the dark and he was severely injured. Another bomb fell within a block and a half of our office, at the Metro Station Quatre Septembre. All the windows within a block were blown out, and within the immediate vicinity the window sashes were empty of glass. At least a dozen bombs did serious damage in various parts of the city. The streets in the Latin Quarter were covered with blood and strewn with dead.

You will see from this description that it was really a serious attack, and it is just a matter of luck whether a bomb falls on the house where one is living. Our apartment is on the sixth, or top floor. Protecting walls are being rapidly built around the monuments on the Place de la Concorde, the Opéra, the Arc de Triomphe, and Place Vendôme.

I have not had an opportunity to write you in detail regarding the Russian Revolution which, I was informed some time ago

*Paris, France,  
Feb. 12th,  
1918.*

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Paris, France,  
Feb. 12th,  
1918.*

by the Vicomtesse de Rancongne, is extremely serious—far more so than the French Revolution—on a larger scale, as it involves the whole country, which is in chaos and ruled by the mob. There were really leaders of ability in the French Revolution and most executions were by trials which were conducted in a comparatively orderly manner. However, such is not the case in Russia, for twenty thousand have been murdered in Petrograd\* and Moscow alone. There the banks have been looted and the neighbors take turns at standing guard all night over their homes. At no time during the French Revolution was money stolen from the banks.

The Vicomtesse has a cousin married to a Russian. They are refugees, financially ruined, and cannot go back. This is only one case of many thousands. Representatives of the Kerensky Government are stranded in Paris without sufficient means to live and with no way of receiving money from Russia, particularly as their properties have been looted by the mobs. The Revolution, under Kerensky, was orderly and well conducted; however, he did not have a sufficiently strong hand, refusing to

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\*Conditions are now indescribably worse; seventy-five percent of the population of Petrograd has disappeared during the past five years, and from fifty to a hundred thousand per month have died of cold and starvation during the present winter.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

spill human blood. The death penalty for soldiers deserting from the army was withdrawn, with the result that thousands deserted, returning to their homes.

It was fascinating to hear the inside story of the beginning of the Revolution from a high British ordnance officer. According to him it was deliberately precipitated by the British Government in order to dethrone the Czar and prevent him from concluding a 'separate peace,\* as he was totally under the influence of his wife, the Czarina, and the pro-German court party as headed by her.

A leading English Duke was sent on a secret mission to see the Czar and instead of receiving the usual courtesy he was received by the Czar in an audience of three-quarters of an hour standing. After this, he at once proceeded to the British Embassy, giving the signal for the Revolution to begin, which the British Government financially backed through leaders of the Douma, including Kerensky.

The description of the Russian members of the Peace Conference at Brest-Litovsk is fantastic. It consisted of a young workman of twenty-one years, of no experience or education; one young soldier and one old "spiritual" or fortune-teller, beside

*Paris, France,  
Feb. 12th,  
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\*This has since been authenticated from a more reliable source.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

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1918.*

a fourth of the same ignorant class. Germany, on the other hand, was represented by the best of her brains and diplomats, including generals and princes. The Russians in the negotiations refused to discuss at length, but stubbornly said what they would do and what they would not do and could not be shaken from these decisions.

We have had a vivid description of trench life by Gus' cousin, Tony Lelong, a former social leader of New Orleans, who enlisted as a "simple" soldier in the French Army a year and a half ago, and now is a Major in the American Army. He has given us some remarkable descriptions of attacks on the enemy trenches, he having gone "over the top" several times with the French. Half of his teeth are gone from being gassed. When I inquired if their attacks had always been successful he said, "Of course, otherwise I would not be here." They occasionally caught the Germans unawares in their underground dug-outs and squirted liquid fire on them, burning them alive like rats in a hole.

In describing the almost abject conditions in which men are reduced in the trenches to living like animals, he said that the soup would have to be brought up from several miles in the rear; and one day, when it

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

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was his turn to go to fetch it and the shelling was continuous, he offered to pay a French soldier to go, but then realized he was asking the man to risk his life in his place and so changed his mind and went himself. He said the shells were bursting around him, and when one burst in front, he jumped back, and when one burst behind him he sprang forward, and then he stood still, not knowing whether to go forward or back, fast or slow. Then he remembered that the boys were waiting for their soup, so decided to run. When he arrived they would reach in with their dirty hands, lifting lumps of dirt out, grunting exclamations of satisfaction and joy over how fine the soup was.

It is a great surprise to find the Belgians, so lauded and regarded as heroes, are now generally disliked. It is said they have lagged and shirked their duty, and are resting on the laurels of their first magnificent stand in holding back the Germans. There are large numbers of Belgian refugees here who at one time refused to work.

My friend Baron\* de Wardener, in the coal business, had a number of boat-loads of coal in the Seine, which he was unable to unload owing to the shortage of labor, and the demurrage was costing a small fortune

\*Captain.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Paris, France,  
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1918.*


daily. There were over one thousand Belgian refugees at the St. Lazare railway station and De Wardener went down to where they were, and standing on a barrel offered the large wages of fifteen francs a day, but was unable to secure a single man willing to work. They were all fed free by the French Government.

This is simply a passing phase illustrating how rapidly a people can fall from a position of idolatry to one of disdain, and how fickle is human appreciation.

With much love to you all, from your most devoted and affectionate son,

FERD.

*Paris, France, Feb. 22nd, 1918.*

OTHER'S charming letter, with enclosures of January 28th, was received February 17th, also a long personal letter from Reverend John Timothy Stone.

Another enormous box of candy was received Saturday just in time for the dinner-dance Gus and I were giving. That is, Katherine Force and I each gave small dinners, afterwards going to her apartment to dance as there are hardwood floors and enormous rooms. Gus and I made all the arrangements, invited the guests and provided the music and punch. Harvey Ladew, who is a First Lieut. of Ordnance,\* was with us. There were ten couples and needless to say the party was a great success as entertainments are scarce and much appreciated. There is some entertaining, however, on a small scale, particularly for British officers returning from the front. The men who are still living and fighting want gaiety and do not care to be greeted with long, sad faces when they return on a few days' "permission." For this reason restaurants are well patronized and private dining-rooms must be always engaged in advance.

\*Later in the Liaison Service.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Paris, France,  
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1918.*

I have been too busy to write in detail regarding the interesting work of the last few weeks with the War Risk Bureau while making our final drive before the twelfth of this month. Captain Willard Mack, a Lieutenant, and I covered all the troops in and around Paris, making addresses when possible. I visited a number of detachments alone, addressing them myself.

The camouflage studio was particularly interesting, with curtains and screens like those used on an enormous stage. The Germans are said to have perfected camouflaging to such an extent that entire army corps pass through villages near the Italian front without being seen by the Allied aviators.

We visited the Supreme War Council, held in the magnificent Palace Hotel at Versailles, to write the insurance of the American officers. It was extremely interesting and the opportunity of a lifetime to witness such a momentous event. Sentries stopped casual people in the quiet streets within two blocks of the building. We saw the conference, which was quiet and dignified, in session in the large salon,\* through glass doors. There were about twenty dis-

\*Where the ceremonial of handing the treaty to the Germans later took place.

tinguished men seated around a long table, including Lloyd George, Clémenceau, Generals Pershing, Bliss, Foch, and Pétain and the British General Robertson. The well-known French crayon artist, Lucien Jonas, was making a book of charcoal sketches for the War Museum at the Invalides to be preserved for posterity. He sketched us as types of Americans, and then had us autograph them. There were no visitors, we being the only ones present besides the attendants. Captain Mack secured the autographs of Lloyd George, Foch, Pétain and Clémenceau as they were leaving the council room.

Afterwards we all had luncheon in the same dining-room at the Hôtel des Réservoirs.\* It was a glorious springlike day and the little children played in the palace grounds with their nurses, oblivious of the fact that the fate of nations and perhaps the destinies of the civilized world would depend upon the decisions of this little group of men. Life was going on as usual at peaceful Versailles as if nobody were aware that such a momentous history-making conference was in session in their midst.

My work under Major H.H. Harjes, Chief Liaison Officer, is going to be extremely

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1918.*

\*Now occupied by the German Envoys to the Peace Conference.

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Paris, France,  
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1918.*

interesting. He is a refined and delightful American of perhaps forty-five, who has lived in Paris all of his life. He is immaculately groomed, a fine type of modern banker, extremely courteous and never orders, but with a pleasant smile says, "Will you please do so and so?" It is an inspiration to work for a man with such a magnetic personality, as it was likewise for Major Willard D. Straight (a Yale graduate, formerly Consul General to China, who negotiated the Chinese Loan for the Syndicate of American Bankers headed by J. P. Morgan; also Vice-President of the International Corporation). He gave a farewell dinner at the Hotel Crillon for all the officers and men of the War Risk Bureau before leaving for the Officers' Staff School.

Thirty officers and forty-five men sat down to dinner in adjoining banquet-rooms, and afterwards the folding doors were thrown open and the officers came in. There were after-dinner speeches and recitations by several of the men, and Major Straight made a farewell address praising both officers and men in the highest terms. He was presented with the most touching resolutions of appreciation from his men expressing their gratitude for his kindness, generosity and wholeheartedness and splendid leadership.

LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

Major Straight has accomplished a big work with his small force, and successfully "put the job over," within the time limit. We have covered every American soldier in every part of France and given him his chance to take insurance. This Insurance Act, which includes both insurance and compensation, the modern word for pension, is the biggest and most generous legislation of the kind ever passed by any government in the history of the world.

Affectionately,

FERD.

*Paris, France,  
Feb. 22nd,  
1917.*

*Paris, France, March 15th, 1918.*



WE HAVE indulged in our second air-raid of the present series. The other evening as I sat reading and musing over loving letters which had been carefully treasured, and was dreaming of America and France, and incidentally enjoying the Chicago Tribune, the shrill sirens, the warning of approaching death and destruction, passed the house, on fast fire department motors.

The great majority of fatalities do not occur in houses struck by bombs, because the number of direct hits is comparatively few, but from the heavy concussions and flying débris hurled several hundred yards in all directions by force of the explosions.

The bombing commenced early, at nine o'clock, and deep mingled intonations of bombs and cannon barrage fire continued almost incessantly for an hour, and intermittently for three hours, before the thirty Boche planes had left and the "all's quiet" was sounded, and people returned from the cellars to their beds.

The barrage is maintained to keep the avions out of Paris. When they have entered the city they cannot be fired at with shrapnel for fear of killing people.

The German planes usually reach Paris about eleven o'clock, as they must cross the lines after dark and it takes an hour or so to reach here.

Paris is quite different in the evenings from what it was a month ago, for the police are strict about prohibiting light showing from windows, and the streets are in almost total darkness. The few remaining dim street gas-lamps have dull blue globes and are well shaded from above. The weird blue-green light is diffused more than white, and scarcely dispels total darkness. It evidently makes a target more difficult to locate from the sky. Street cars and métro, which come to the surface to cross the Seine, are similarly dimly lighted. One goes stumbling about in the dark, as in the days of Dickens in London.

Many buildings have posters marked "Abri—100 persons," or whatever the number may be, meaning their cellars have been chosen and prepared for shelter by the Government, on account of unusually strong construction. Some of the deeper métro stations, such as at the Place de l'Opéra and Place de la Concorde, have small electric signs, "Refuge," and the public is permitted to crowd in free of charge. The métro trains are stopped during the raids, which causes consternation among parents wish-

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March 15th,  
1918.*

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

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1918.*

ing to get home from the theaters to put their children in a place of safety. The French are un-nerved but take the raids good-naturedly; however, there is considerable openly expressed indignation among American officers, who are not accustomed to this indiscriminate slaughter of innocents.

The protecting of famous historical monuments and statues and architectural treasures is progressing deliberately, even slowly, on account of lack of labor, but most thoroly, as if preparing for a long summer siege. Heavy frame-work is built around whatever is to be protected, and frequently a heavy stone wall ten or fifteen feet high, on top of which sacks of earth to a thickness of four or five feet are carefully piled. The fine examples of sculptured art on the façades of buildings, churches and monuments are what is most carefully protected.

Listening to the buzz of enemy motors and waiting for an air raid to pass is like sitting indoors during a severe spring electrical storm, waiting for the lightning to strike. However, it is rather more serious. It makes one stop and ponder and want to make a hasty peace with his Creator. Nothing has a more sobering and purifying influence than the proximity of violent death. We experienced the same sensa-

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

tions during our engagement with submarines when crossing on the Henderson. It makes one realize how futile our little lives are, how cheap human endeavor is, and how easily we may be wafted into eternity.

To speak of something more pleasant, I had dinner the other evening at the Ritz with Elsie Janis and several men, all officers, for that is all the men there are now.

My work with Major Harjes is progressing splendidly and my French is getting well limbered. With lots of love to you all,

Most affectionately your devoted son,

FERD.

*Paris, France,  
March 15th,  
1918.*

*Paris, France, April 11th, 1918.*



OUR recent large envelopes containing letters of February 2nd, 16th and 21st, with interesting enclosures, also letters of February 5th, January 18th, January 28th, etc., have all been received and most heartily appreciated. I am receiving so many long, loving letters from you and some of my friends it is almost impossible to keep track of them and to reply. There are so many things I want to write about I hardly know how to begin.

In the first place, I was delighted to know that Jack had been commissioned as Ensign so promptly. I cabled you recently: "Commissioned Second Lieutenant Infantry. Congratulations to Jack. Love. Lieutenant Jelke." After waiting all these tedious months, and many times almost despairing of success, my commission finally arrived most unexpectedly. Word was received at noon and two hours later I took the oath of office. Gus Ferrier was sworn in two days before and has been like a delighted child.

I am to be stationed in Paris, and privileged to wear spurs, although an infantry officer—staff officers are supposed

to be mounted, but have automobiles nowadays—and am to go on special missions requiring the services of a liaison officer any place in France. Had I been allowed to choose exactly what I would prefer to do, of all things this is the best. You understand that this is administrative liaison work between the American and French military authorities, requiring the services of “diplomats,” and every officer on the staff is chosen for his peculiar qualifications for this work.\*

I made two interesting trips lately as interpreter with a Captain Ferdinand Bartelme, formerly in the lumber business, and who for some years lived in Chicago. One trip was near Château-Thierry to inspect a French military plant for making excelsior used as bedding for soldiers, and another was in a Fiat limousine, over two hundred and fifty miles, near Havre, to visit a civilian plant of the same kind. I secured full technical and practical details for the manufacture of excelsior, and complete blue-print plans for the construction

\*“Liaison” means joining, connection, ligature, or slur (as in music, or pronunciation of two French words).

Liaison Service in the French Army includes *all* Signal Corps work. Agent-de-liaison means a runner between two field units.

In the American Army the term “Liaison Service” applies to our special service attaching American officers to French Army and Army Corps Staffs and various Departments of the Ministry of War in a purely diplomatic capacity.

*Paris, France,  
April 11th,  
1918.*

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Paris, France,  
April 11th,  
1918.*

of excelsior plants which they are considering placing behind the American front.

One thing I was most impressed by in the various towns was the plentifulness of food, and we gourmandized, thinking that perhaps each good meal would be the last. The whole idea of the French stinting or depriving themselves is more or less of a joke, as it is contrary to their natures. Don't misunderstand me; I mean they are easy-going, but at the same time frugal. Food is plentiful, of course at prices higher than usual, which is hard on the poor. To be sure, sugar is scarce, each person limited to one pound per month, and butter is no longer served in restaurants, as it is forbidden by law. It is a dollar a pound for fresh unsalted. These are the only articles in which there appears to be a great shortage. The consumption of bread was restricted by the use of bread cards the first of April, but this is becoming lax.

The headquarters of the Transportation of the A. E. F., under Brig. General Wallace Atterbury, former Vice-President of the Pennsylvania Railroad, where Gus is attached, has moved to Tours, and we recently arranged several small farewell dinners in their honor and also to celebrate receiving our commissions.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

Lieut.-Colonel\* Charles G. Dawes, former president of the Central Trust Company of Illinois, whom I occasionally see, is also doing some exceptional work as head of the A. E. F. Purchasing Board.

With much love to you all, affectionately,  
your devoted son,

FERD.

*Paris, France,  
April 11th,  
1918.*

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\*Now Brigadier General.

*Paris, France, April 15th, 1918.*



THE first days of the Big Bertha, no one knew what it was. As I was on my way to my office, and stopped at the boot-makers, the iron shutters were closed; some one volunteered, "You can enter through the rear door in the court." I went in and found the proprietor serving a customer with the electric lights burning. He said "Have you not heard the 'alert?'" I replied that it was ridiculous, the German planes were not coming in bright daylight. Upon returning to my taxi, the taxi driver refused to go further, and I argued with him, saying the Boches will not arrive before half an hour after the "alert."

The streets were thronged with buzzing shop people and working girls, looking into the sky, who had quit work and were swarming as on a holiday. I continued to my office, and thought little further of the matter. At noon, there were no taxis to be had. The métro had stopped and the few remaining running taxis were each loaded with eight or ten people. Finally, upon reaching the Place de l'Opéra, the streets were filled with people all of whom

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

were to discontinue work for several days to come.

The next morning our maid, who had spent most of the night in the cellar, talked about the German cannon, and said, "Why, it is written in the papers." I replied, "Don't be foolish, that is impossible, the Germans are sixty miles away."

For several days every one speculated and finally concluded that spies had sequestered an air-compressed cannon in a house in the suburbs which was shot through the skylight. This theory was quite generally accepted, and it was fully a week before it became known from whence came the shells that were dropping regularly every twenty minutes.

The second day, as I was looking out of the fifth story office window, I saw a large sugar factory, on the left bank of the Seine, struck and go up in a cloud of smoke and dust.

Devotedly,

FERD.

*Paris, France,  
April 15th,  
1918.*

*Paris, France, April 16th, 1918.*



LAST night I had the pleasure of being the guest of honor at a brilliant dinner for twelve given by the Duc\* and Duchess de Montmorency at their home, virtually a palace, in the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, Lieutenant Harold Crandall, who is living with me, since Gus left Paris, and I being the only American officers present. The Princess Lucien Murat,\*\* perhaps the most socially prominent woman in Paris, and one of the most brilliant, was on the host's right, while I was seated on the hostess' right. On my other side was Mme. Vesnitch, the wife of the Servian Minister,\*\*\* the sister of the Duchess. They said it is good luck to sit at dinner between two sisters. There was also the daughter of Mme. Vesnitch, a charming girl.

Dinner was served by four butlers (réformés), and the house is not surpassed by any in New York or Paris. The paintings had been removed from their frames in the art-gallery and put in the cellar on account of the danger of bombs.

\*Captain.

\*\*Whose home was occupied by President Wilson during his first trip to Paris.

\*\*\*Dr. M. Vesnitch is the Servian Delegate to the Peace Conference.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

The Princess Murat, who does not look her position (or rather does), is extremely plain and appears more like a *littérature*, which she is, than a society woman. She has written a book on "Rasputin," part of which appeared in the "Century" last year, and is now writing one on George Washington and Lafayette, for children, which she is illustrating herself. Her conversation and ideas are most original and interesting. Her husband's mother was a Russian from the Caucasus, and the Princess has been to Russia no less than eight or ten times, having traveled extensively throughout Russia. In fact, the Prince is now living on their estates in the Caucasus, and she returned to France two years ago to place her young son in the French Army as a common soldier. This she did against the wishes of her relatives, because he is not strong, and on account of his birth he could have had a commission in the Russian Army. In this way he could have avoided being subjected to the hardships of a "simple soldier" in a Republican Army. However, she said, "I am going to take my son back to die on the fields of France." All of her son's Russian boy officer friends have since been put to death by the "people" in the Caucasus.

The more the complicated conditions of this vast empire are disclosed, the more they

*Paris, France,  
April 16th,  
1918.*

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Paris, France,  
April 16th,  
1918.*

become mystifying, and the more one realizes his ignorance concerning this hidden country, so rich in latent resources, which are the greatest in the world. The revolution itself cannot be attributed to any one cause. It was simply like something that is ripe. The Czar, who had been accustomed to absolute power—a thing she says we can scarcely comprehend—and whose father and grandfather before him had known nothing else, might have prevented it by appointing a minister responsible to the people, but this is doubtful. As to his signing a separate peace, his mother assured the Princess, shortly before, that her son would never do that, for, as she said, “*Mon fils a donné sa parole d'honneur.*”

When the French and English missions came to America last March, a year ago, and admitted the serious conditions, many thought we had been duped in previously being led to believe Germany was about to collapse; however, such was really the case, for if Russia had held out three or four months longer, Germany would then have received the death thrust. Most Americans have only a vague conception of the situation, owing to their lack of knowledge of the geography of the country, its resources and the facts. Many French know little more, and I haven't talked to any one who

has so comprehensive a grasp or who has spoken so frankly as the Princess, except possibly the Vicomtesse de Rancongne. She said she would not have admitted it herself a week ago, and it wouldn't do to tell the people the whole truth now, but we are passing through the crisis and gravest period of the war.

Unfortunately, the Allies have never pulled simultaneously and in full unison, owing to the difference in language and the lack of a supreme commander. They have not been in tune, so to speak. The Germans and Austrians have had a great advantage in this respect. The Kaiser said to his brother-in-law, the King of Greece, several days before the battle, that he was going to win on account of the Allies not having a Supreme Command. Maréchal Foch was put in supreme command only on the first day of the battle. Think of it! Even our children in reading history will think we were mad to make so belated a change in organization. But if it had not been made, the battle would have been lost; it was all that saved the Allies from a crushing defeat—so say the French. Clémenceau brought his fist down on the table two days before the battle started and said to Lloyd George, "If you don't put Foch in command, I will sign peace

*Paris, France,  
April 16th,  
1918.*

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Paris, France,  
April 16th,  
1918.*

to-morrow." It was the pressure of the Americans that brought this about. The American General Staff and Pershing strongly endorsed one command months ago, which he stated at the time in conversation with the Princess.

Very devotedly and affectionately, your  
son,

FERD.

*Paris, France, April 26th, 1918.*



THE average American officer knows very little of the psychology and the inside workings of French minds, as one soon finds from the general conversation in a French salon. Things which we do not talk about, even if we know of them, are frequently common knowledge and openly discussed. It is interesting to mingle with French whose opinions are of importance, and to hear their ideas, always friendly, regarding us. They speak quite intimately; knowing, I understand and appreciate their point of view, although frequently it is quite different from our own. Studying the French and the developments from day to day is like watching an ever-changing kaleidoscope. It is almost impossible to keep informed on the news up-to-date. Their one and sole topic of conversation is the war: one talks about it before dinner, during dinner, and after dinner. Some one says, "Now, we have talked enough about the war, let us change the subject," and a feeble attempt is made, but always with the same result—the conversation reverts to the war. It is all one knows; it's all we talked of at the last place, or shall at the next; it's all we

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Paris, France,  
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1918.*

think of, read of, or care about. In fact, it is the one and only absorbing topic every one is interested in, as it is nearest their hearts. The pros and cons are discussed with all their ramifications, and when will the war end and how? It isn't all one glorious succession of victories, as the American press naively would lead one to believe. There is a seamy side, which these people know, and about which they have no hallucinations. "Guillaume" isn't in reality a tottering, old, senile degenerate waiting to be easily pushed off his wobbly throne, as depicted by the American press and cartoonists; but the German Army, which we choose to personify in him, is a great and powerful machine, a serious menace to the world, and is no joke, despite our caricatures. The foreign press does not speak of the enemy in the jesting, flippant manner the American papers do.

The French do not differentiate between "William" and the German people. Perhaps they are too close to get this perspective. All they see is a heartless, cruel, and powerful army with hordes of devastating and murdering Huns, fighting regardless of rules of war or code of honor. Trying to lay the blame personally on the Kaiser does not occur to them. They haven't the warm or even neutral spot in their hearts of other

countries to explain German rapacity by blaming this awful cataclysm on one man.

This leads me to the point that I cannot believe the Germans intend to fight the Americans to a finish; not through purely humanitarian or sentimental reasons, but because of the deep-seated bitterness that already exists in every English and French home. They cannot well afford, for commercial reasons, to so embitter another hundred million. Every family in America still untouched by the hand of death does not yet have this feeling of hatred, and is only fighting through a sense of duty, of justice and right. When looked at in this light, as expressed to me by a French officer, it is the most wonderful chivalry ever known. The Crusades sink into insignificance.

While in conversation with a Canadian Colonel, he spoke of how cheaply human life is held. Every English noble house has lost its eldest son. All look upon the body as simply a box temporarily inhabited, and death as a perfectly natural occurrence to be expected. He told a story of the readiness with which many Germans now surrender when given the opportunity. This day hundreds came running into the English trenches with their hands up calling "Kamerad." An English sergeant standing

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## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

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at the end of the trench allowed them to pass, stopping each one and making him say, "God save the King."

A French Captain whom I met at dinner at the Duke of Montmorency's, who had been wounded three times, told of killing fifteen hundred Germans in one afternoon (official estimate) at Verdun the day he was wounded, with his machine company. The Germans advanced in solid formation, in wave after wave, and were mowed down by his "mitrailleuses," hidden in shell-craters, like wheat before a mowing machine. He and his men had been ordered to hold their places and to fight until death; however, they lost only about ten men. The intrepid bravery of the Germans is spoken of unhesitatingly by the French.

If the Germans had thrown one more fresh division in at Verdun, they could have gone straight thru to Paris; however, luckily, they either didn't know this or didn't have the division.

I wrote, during the winter, of Paris being almost gay, at least quite normal on the surface. There has been a marked change since the air-raids and long distance cannonading commenced,\* to which I thought

\*There were over five hundred aerial bombs and over five hundred long-distance six-inch shells, all containing high explosives, dropped on Paris.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

the depression was due, as people were panicky, and a million left the city. The provincial towns, Biarritz and resorts on the Riviera are crowded. At some of the stations are signs, "Don't get off here, there are no more beds." However, the general sadness that has come into everyone's heart is due more to apprehension and the awful carnage of the great German drive. The spring defensive and another season's campaign is enough to depress people, but underlying it all is a grim determination.

Affectionately,

FERD.

*Paris, France,  
April 26th,  
1918.*

*Orleans, France, May 1st, 1918.*



ONE constantly must study the courtesies and formalities which are so dear to a Frenchman's heart, for they are quick to imagine a lack of refinement and recoil under the aggressive manners of the American officers. It is necessary to observe what seems to us an exaggerated form of politeness—a regular Alphonse and Gaston continuous performance. For instance, upon entering an office, a regular round of hand-shaking ensues, and again twice before leaving, once upon starting to leave, and after much more conversation, again upon actually departing.

It is most important to delicately first gain a Frenchman's confidence by agreeing with his point of view, and then he will usually reciprocate by conceding your point of view and granting the favor requested. Frenchmen are rather shy of the rapidity with which Americans do business.

The poorest way to make haste is to show an indication of being in a hurry, or by coming directly to the point, for one saves time in the long run by going over a certain amount of preliminary formalities and

LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

lengthy explanations even in the most urgent matters.

Most affectionately, your devoted son,

FERD.

*Orleans, France,  
May 1st,  
1918.*

*Orleans, France, May 3rd, 1918.*

. . . . .

**H**ERE I am on the Staff of General de l'Espée, commanding the Fifth French Army Corps, acting as assistant to Captain J. Tarn McGrew.

The shell that struck the Ste. Gervaise church in Paris Good Friday afternoon, killing seventy-five of the worshipping congregation, hit not over five minutes' walk from the American Headquarters, at the Hôtel Méditerranée, and probably was intended for us.

Easter Sunday morning, instead of attending divine service, I visited the Cathedral, a scene of horror and destruction. The shell had struck the arch and exploded over the main nave, causing part of the stone roof to collapse, burying the worshipping congregation under tons of rock. It was in a pyramid, ten feet high, like a great funeral pyre, with many pieces of rock several feet square. There were half dried pools of blood where bodies had been crushed. It was a chance hit, and looked like the hand of destiny, striking at this moment and place on so sacred a day.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

People were feeling pretty blue, and the railway stations and trains were jammed with crowds getting away. The first days of the bombardment the telephones were stopped, the telegraph offices closed, and the railroad stations deserted by the employees.

At luncheon Monday, which was a holiday, at the Maurice, every one seemed gay, unmindful of the city being shelled, and that one of the greatest battles in the history of mankind\* was being fought at a distance slightly greater than that from Elgin to Chicago or Bridgeport to New York. Tension was relieved, however, at better news from the front, where things had been going "not at all well."

An unusual thing happened several days ago. I was walking up the street with the Provost Marshal; he stopped several officers asking where they were going, and where from, and they replied, from the Artillery School at Saumur. I said, "Why, I have a cousin there; perhaps you know him." Upon further inquiry, I found there were several hundred artillery officers at the station on their way to the front, so we walked to the station and lo and behold! there was cousin Ferd, looking well and

*Orleans, France,  
May 3rd,  
1918.*

\*This was during the Germans' first spring drive of 1918, when the Fifth British Army was destroyed.

LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
May 3rd,  
1918.*

delighted to see me. The train pulled out in several minutes and it was almost like a fleeting apparition.

They were a wonderful lot of fine young thorobreds, for, as you know, it requires some knowledge of mathematics to be an artillery officer, and they were probably all college boys.

Devotedly,

FERD.

*Orleans, France, May 12th, 1918.*



FOR weeks since the battle started, one can go down to the railway station in this small city any evening and see crowds of destitute refugees huddled together in the French Red Cross Military Canteen awaiting various train connections. The wretches, although respectable peasants and townspeople, feeble old men, women with dishevelled hair, and dirty children, have fled for their lives before the bloodthirsty advancing Huns. They are huddled together like dumb animals in a storm, remaining mute, neither complaining nor begging. They are transported and fed by the Government and conveyed to other towns, where they again seek work or eke out whatever existence they can. Bereft of their homes, cottages, stores, gardens, and all their worldly goods and means of subsistence, their meager savings of a lifetime, and perhaps inheritances of several generations, the poor wretches still almost have an appearance of "Are we downhearted? Well, I guess not." The babies and younger children sleep or play, for they are too young to realize the tragedy, and the older girls and mothers have a resigned or

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
May 12th,  
1918.*

despairing look of taking it all for granted, as if it were only natural and to be expected.

They have become 'accustomed to this after four years, for it is not their first experience of this sort, when they have been driven from their homes and their country invaded by the enemy.

The Belgian refugees are unfortunately called "immigrants" by the French working classes. They have not received the most hospitable haven of refuge in France, as they are regarded as lazy. At the time of the German advance through Belgium, there were forty thousand Belgian wounded dumped on London in one week, none of whom spoke either French or English, but Flemish. It was chaos. The mud and dirt was caked on their faces and bodies so thick it had to be soaked loose with vaseline.

Such sights make one profoundly happy for the very privilege of living. The mere thought of being clothed, well fed, warm and happy, with a comfortable place to sleep is enough to make one glow with thankfulness that fate has not ordained this for him.

The station is usually swarming with French "poilus," going and coming from the front. You know the meaning of the word "poilu" is "hairy boys," "poil" mean-

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

ing "hair." At the beginning of the war, before things were organized, they had no chance to shave, and became very hairy. But now all French soldiers, when on leave, have a clean new uniform kept for the purpose, and they are forbidden to appear in the streets in their dirty trench clothes.

Brussels is used as a clearing house by the Germans returning from the front on leave. They stop there for two days to renovate. This is in order to prevent taking home too strong and grimy a trench odor with all its sordidness. Champagne is drunk freely by German officers in Brussels to liven them before returning.

Wounded soldiers are no longer brought to the hospitals of Paris, and few even to the big Red Cross Hospital at Neuilly, a suburb, as every effort is made to maintain the public morale as cheerful as possible. I understand that even in Dunkirk, which has been constantly shelled for two years, the trams continue to run and business goes on as usual. People have heroically moved their bedrooms to the cellars and "carry on."

This war has revealed unexpected national traits of character. The French, who are normally light hearted and gay, forbid dancing, while the staid English encourage gaiety. London is livelier than

*Orleans, France,  
May 12th,  
1918.*

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
May 12th,  
1918.*

ever with dances for the soldiers on leave from the front. General immorality in France is surprisingly lacking. I mean aside from the regulars. After leaving the stench of the sea-ports, Paris appears moral, and, until recently, normal. Poor Paris is no longer "Gai Paree." Most of the theaters, excepting perhaps half a dozen, after spasmodically struggling to keep open during the past two months' bombardment, are now closed. Some evenings they were open and others closed, one never knowing in advance, depending upon the violence of the previous aerial raid. Frequently they closed during the performance, when the "alert" was sounded and everybody scurried home in the darkness, as best they could, or descended into the caves. All theaters have explicit directions and conspicuous signs posted for reaching the "caves." In fact, the latest is a theater in a cellar, called the "Abri"—"Refuge."

Affectionately,

FERD.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

### AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES OFFICE OF THE LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France, May 21st, 1918.*



T'S an odd coincidence; you were in my mind this morning when I awoke, and I looked for your letter of March 1 in order to write you, and here upon my arrival at the office is another letter which I am really most delighted to receive.

Judging from your letter, life is going on in New York about the same as usual, and it is astonishing how much so that is the case here, with the civilian population.

My work is strictly of a diplomatic nature, between the French military authorities and commanding officers of American troops stationed in the Fifth Region. Owing to the difference in customs, temperament, and viewpoint, there are constantly many complicated and delicate questions arising to be settled, requiring the greatest tact. Their satisfactory adjustment without friction is naturally of the utmost importance, and it is the work of the Liaison Officers to be persona gratia with the French and to supply the necessary drop of oil to insure this.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
May 21st,  
1918.*

The American Liaison Service was organized during the winter by Major H. H. Harjes of the banking firm of Morgan-Harjes, and of the former Norton-Harjes Ambulance Service, before it was absorbed by the Red Cross,\* when the United States entered the war. Do not confuse this with the Corps of Interpreters, which is quite a different service. The Liaison Service consists only of officers, mostly Captains and Majors, and some Lieutenants. It was the intention to have nothing less than Captains; however, the War Department is reluctant in granting the increase in rank.

As paradoxical as it may seem, commissions and promotion are more difficult to secure "over here" than in America. Large numbers of officers are being shipped back who have not made good. The weeding process is severe, and officers are returned to America without the slightest hesitancy when considered incompetent.

I am on the road in my army car three or four days each week, which is most agreeable.

By looking at the departmental map in the Encyclopedia Britannica, you can see exactly what the Fifth Army Corps Region comprises: the Departments of Loiret, Loir-et-Cher, Yonne, and Seine-et-Marne. In

\*Later by the American Army.

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

your Baedeker of Northern France you will see the garrison town of Orleans is notable—in addition to Jeanne d'Arc—as being the headquarters of the Fifth Army Corps. General de l'Espée lives in a governmental residence similar to a governor's palace. There are over a hundred thousand French soldiers in the Region and about the same number of Americans.

My work is never two days alike, and my experiences are like an ever-changing kaleidoscope. Last Saturday, I accompanied the French General, with his Chief of Staff, and others of his staff officers to take part in the ceremonies of the christening and flying of the first American aeroplane assembled in France at Romarantin, which was quite an occasion—the General at first giving a luncheon for the members of his party.

In spite of your finding my letters interesting, I can write only in a superficial way, and am compelled to omit mentioning many of the most important things, or only speak of them in a casual manner.

Sincerely, as ever, your friend,

FERD.

*Orleans, France,  
May 21st,  
1918.*

*Orleans, France, June 2nd, 1918.*



OUR charming and loving letter of April 28th, from the farm, was forwarded from Bourges and received on the 25th. It was opened by the French censor. I endeavor to send you a descriptive letter about twice a month, which requires some time, as there is no stenographer in this town able to even copy English writing, unless spelled out in a bold school-boy hand. I always like to mail separate copies of these letters by different steamers, as some are newsy, and may fall under the censor's ax.

This is a mediocre, uninteresting French provincial city of one hundred thousand, retaining none of its former medieval splendor, with the exception of a fine old cathedral, several statues and a museum. The people are provincial in the extreme, and there is not even a good tourist hotel.

You know the form of government of France tends to centralize and draw all that is best towards Paris. Everything radiates from Paris like the spokes of a wheel, even the railroads. All that is worth while in education, wealth, culture, ability and breeding drains into Paris, to such an extent as is unknown in America.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

The entire governmental machinery is constructed with this in view. Civil France is divided into eighty-six Departments, corresponding to our states or counties, but instead of a governor elected by the people, there is a Préfet, and under him a Sous-Préfet, both appointed by the Minister of Interior, who has been appointed by the President of France, and who in turn was elected by popular vote of the people. While it is a representative republican organization, at the same time it focuses all in a very powerful centralized government. Such a thing as "states' rights" is unknown. The result is that men of ability aspire to local fame merely as a stepping stone.

All advancement is towards Paris. All large banks are there. The Crédit Lyonnais, Comptoir National, Banque de France, and Société Générale handle practically all the banking business of France thru their hundreds of branches.

There are no colleges or universities of international importance aside from the Sorbonne—University of Paris—where there were over fifty thousand students before the war. Instead of professors and other governmental employments remaining locally prominent to add luster to their home

*Orleans, France,  
June 2nd,  
1918.*

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
June 2nd,  
1918.*

cities, they are advanced toward the Capital.

Paris is the Mecca of the world of brains, wealth, talent and beauty. Artists are paid little, as they are willing to perform simply for the name—in fact, they must, otherwise they are not wanted by the Provinces.

The fact is that most prominent Parisians, if not themselves born in the Provinces, their parents or grandparents were. The difference is like two different races. It is as in America; they quickly lose their provincialism when they move to the Metropolis.

Military France is divided into twenty-two Regions, each commanded by a Lieutenant General who, with his staff is stationed in the principal city. In each Region is the headquarters of an Army Corps. "Etat Major, 5ème Région," means Staff Headquarters, Fifth Army Corps. This Region comprises four departments and is one of the most central and important. The commanding general of each Region occupies a prominent position and has the authority of a small potentate, responsible directly to the Minister of War.

Very devotedly,

FERD.

*Orleans, France, June 18th, 1918.*



JUST a line to let you know I am well and happy and too busy to write. I have been fully occupied during the past two weeks, since temporarily taking over the office of the Provost Marshal on June 5th, which reminds me it is almost that long since I last wrote. My! how the time flies! It is incredible. Of course we are all very happy over the American successes, because it means ultimate victory. But we are passing through a most serious phase of the war this summer, as the Germans realize it is Paris now or never, and they are making a superhuman effort to get close enough to shell the Capital with heavy long-range guns. It is the Americans who have temporarily stopped the Germans and given them a rude shock; however, the drives are expected to last all summer or until the Germans are exhausted. They bitterly hate the Americans.

I am unable to write much regarding the military situation, as it is too serious. Orleans is packed to overflowing and rooms impossible to get. I have a Corporal out now piloting and interpreting for a dozen officers, trying to get them rooms in private

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
June 18th,  
1918.*

houses for the night. When the situation becomes too acute, I send to the Mayor and secure "billets de logement," which means lodging officers in private homes in the name of the law, without payment. Thirty were lodged the other night. They marched up the street, ringing the door-bells of the places on the list, and handed in the slips with two officers, saying "I have brought two officers to be lodged for the night." The householders could not refuse.

They were all clean, pleasant homes of the better class, and the occupants were all hospitable in taking in the American officers.

As I was returning from a motor trip the people called after the passing car, "God bless you," and the little children enthusiastically waved greetings. We are the hope, l'espoir, the salvation, and they know it. The fighting qualities of our troops have been a revelation. Our men, as new as they are, are wonderful fighters, and whereas there was previously a feeling of indifferent tolerance, there is now one of actual reverence for us.

Lots of love to you all, devotedly,

FERD.

*Fontainebleau, France, July 20th, 1918.*



HIS beautiful little city, not so far from the fighting, is peaceful, except for swarming soldiers. The fine hotels which were crowded all winter are deserted. People are fleeing from Paris and the front. The roads contained long lines of wagons and carts of all sorts, loaded with refugees, old men, women, and children, furniture, household utensils of every description, cows, dogs, and all sorts of domestic animals, flying before the onrushing hordes like birds before a storm.

One marvels at their almost gay look of contentment. The psychology is that after the first panic at the news of the approaching Germans has subsided, and they have reached safety, a temporary reaction sets in, almost a gay hysteria. The great sorrow commences after the excitement of the flight is past and they settle down to the realization of the loss of all their worldly possessions, and years of poverty and miserable struggle for existence that lie ahead.

The flight has been stopped, thank God! for the moment, by the hardihood and intrepid bravery of the Americans. The French are inclined to save their men, but

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Fontainebleau,  
France,  
July 20th,  
1918.*

Americans threw themselves into the vortex of the fiery furnace and fought regardless of loss of life,\* as the Germans do, determined at all costs to stop their further advance on Paris.

They fought with the dash and courage and keen resourcefulness of our early pioneer forefathers, of which you and I are so justly proud. A year's simple life and outdoor training in the camps of America and on the fields of France has again developed the same latent qualities of stamina and made them brawny, sinewy and hard, able to stand the gruelling strain and hardships of the battlefield.

When they charge, they dash forward with the abandon as if in a foot-ball game. They frequently throw away their coats and helmets, rolling up their sleeves, to the wonder of these foreign soldiers, as they shoot, beat, bayonet, kill and annihilate everything before them with their youthful strength and energy, frequently taking no prisoners,\*\* which has terrorized the Germans; but don't think this is done without heavy losses.

Would that I could open up and tell you of all that is going on! I have to be so guarded in what I say, now that the war is

\*About one-half of two divisions was lost at Château-Thierry.

\*\*Owing to German treachery.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

at the most furious period of the past four years. The Germans, gloating over their successes, are determined to bring the war to a victorious finish this season by taking Paris, and later cutting the American lines of communication, before our full strength can be brought to bear next year.

. . . . .

Lots of love to you all.

Very devotedly,

FERD.

*Fontainebleau,  
France,  
July 20th,  
1918.*

*Orleans, France, July 22nd, 1918.*



THE time is racing by so rapidly it seems impossible to keep account of it. I have been constantly in the midst of a whirl since taking over the office of Provost Marshal, in addition to my regular liaison duties, attending and officiating at functions of all kinds, including luncheons, funerals, church memorial services, athletic events, receiving guests, military reviews, etc., particularly in connection with the celebrations on the 4th and 14th of July, which were elaborate.

I was busy for days in advance with the French Staff arranging the all-day programs for these days. The French are fond of fêtes and ceremonies and are anxious to render all the homage possible to Americans on every possible occasion. They have found it easy to handle American business through me, so I am called upon for every possible kind of service.

On July 14th, the French military review and the awarding of decorations was held by General de l'Espée. The American Brigadier General Vollrath was here from Saint Aignan with a band of fifty pieces

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

and a color guard of sixty. The review was held with a great deal of pomp and ceremony.

I spent the entire afternoon and evening of the previous day informally with General Vollrath and his aid, showing them all the historical points of interest in Orleans, later dining and attending the theater together. When we entered it was announced from the stage that an American General had arrived and the national anthems of America and France were played, while the audience stood.

After the review at nine a. m. we went to the only Protestant church, where memorial services had been arranged. The church was small and unimportant, as the powerful churches are Catholic; however a Y. M. C. A. chaplain preached an inspiring sermon. The French pastor spoke in French, and American hymns were sung by a choir of American soldiers.

At noon a formal luncheon was given by General de l'Espée\* for nine American and nine French officers, including four Generals, the Mayor of Orleans and the Préfet.\*\* It was a most distinguished gathering, and although I was the only officer of modest

*Orleans, France,  
July 22nd,  
1918.*

\*At the commencement of the war he was the foremost Cavalry General in France, but with the introduction of trench warfare his cavalry divisions were dismounted.

\*\*Local Governor.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
July 22nd,  
1918.*

rank present, I was treated with the same kindness and respect as the Generals themselves. The other American officers were given a luncheon at the officers' club. During the luncheon the band played in the square in front of the hotel, and afterwards, during coffee, we went out on the balcony overlooking the crowd, like royalty. The public square below was filled with thousands of cheering people.

At three o'clock athletic events were held between the French and Americans at which the Americans took all first prizes. There were also boxing matches. General Vollrath had brought with him a track team of fifteen, who had captured all the honors at Paris on the Fourth. There was an enormous crowd of thousands of spectators and I was the day's master of ceremonies for the Americans, while a French Major had charge of the French.

At five-thirty the doctors held a reception to inaugurate the opening of the new two thousand-bed hospital, Base 202. At seven-thirty the French medical officers gave a dinner to the American officers, at which there was much after-dinner speaking and eulogistic praise exchanged.

The Fourth of July was even a bigger day than the Fourteenth. The Fourth was

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

arranged in our honor by the French and we reciprocated on the Fourteenth.

Since starting to write, I have received an emergency 'phone call from one of the many small villages, where we are requisitioning horses, to send an ambulance for a soldier kicked and unconscious and in bad condition. We are requisitioning five thousand horses in this Region in five weeks, taking them out of the harvest fields to the consternation of the farmers. The horse question is most acute, as it has suddenly developed that enormous numbers are needed to move supplies where motors cannot be used at the front. The British lost fifty thousand when their Fifth Army was destroyed in the spring. And now the French are scouring the country for fifty thousand in response to our emergency call. Lieut. Lydig Hoyt has charge in this Region, and Lieut.-Colonel Richard H. Williams, Jr., as head of the Remount Service, and both Liaison Officers, has entire charge.

French 'phone connection is interminably slow, so I walked over to the new American hospital, to get an ambulance, where the reception was held on the Fourteenth and the first batch of four hundred wounded was received on the sixteenth. It's a sight horrible enough to weaken the stanchest heart.

*Orleans, France,  
July 22nd,  
1918.*

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
July 22nd,  
1918.*

The small staff of doctors and nurses are working day and night. Fortunately there are several hundred hospital orderlies and men to assist. These soldiers, with the most horrible wounds, many of which I saw dressed, some minus arms or legs, and who were in the battle of Monday the fifteenth,\* are positively looking fine and are in splendid spirits. A peculiar psychological fact is that wounded men with amputations express no regrets for the parts lost, and seem always cheerful. I have frequently noticed this with the French; but to see these big, fine specimens of American manhood lying there, mangled and amputated, without uttering a murmur of complaint or remorse, and suffering the most intense agony when their gaping wounds are dressed, is enough to make one offer up a silent prayer to Almighty God.

I am accustomed to hear men complain in camp, but after living through this purge of fire they come out of it purer and more noble. War is a terrific purifier and purger of men's souls.

Lots of love to you all from your devoted son,

FERD.

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\*At Château-Thierry.

*Orleans, France, July 27th, 1918.*



HAVE just returned from the hospital and find your charming letter of July 8th on my desk.

Your letters and those of some of my friends are a wonderful incentive and inspiration to maintain one's spirits and to keep up the good work. The appreciation and admiration of those one loves is a wonderful stimulus, and is really all we live for over here, and is what many are dying for.

Another American sanitary train load of two hundred and fifty, mostly seriously wounded, arrived last night from the front. They were in the battle Monday. I was at the station and it was a wonderful sight. I say wonderful in the sense of awe-inspiring, sublime, to see these great steel cars, especially built by us for use on these small railroads—plainly painted and simply lettered "U. S.," with nothing more—smoothly gliding and bearing its load of suffering, burned and mangled human freight on stretchers. These hardy, brave and uncomplaining Americans are made of the same sturdy stuff that made our forefathers famous at Lexington, and made them push later as pioneers across the wild prairies of the Middle West.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
July 27th,  
1918.*

As a little group of us stood silently around the cars, the hospital orderlies and attendants worked quietly and swiftly, gently lifting the stretchers from the cars, with scarcely a word and without confusion. The officers were all in one car, about twenty, including a desperately wounded Colonel and Major. But there was nothing to distinguish them; all were treated alike. There was never a harsh or rough word; all were spellbound by the solemnity of these wounded heroes returning from the field of battle. Each man was well bandaged, wore pajamas, and was wrapped in a blanket. They lay silently on their stretchers, looking worn and pale in spite of their heavy coating of tan, never moaning nor uttering a word except occasionally in reply to a question from the stretcher-bearers. One boy of not over nineteen, who had one leg shot away and the other badly wounded, simply said, when they tried to make him comfortable, "Go easy, pals, I'm suffering a little," and thanked them.

The first train load of wounded, which arrived a week ago, was mostly gas cases, some light; but as Major Bishop in command said to-day, these are a lot of very seriously wounded. This mustard gas is a dastardly and damnable thing, frightfully

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

blistering and burning the body, especially in the moist and hairy places, and making the most horrible sores. If enough gets into the lungs, it kills either at once or by a long and horrible, lingering death. It burns the lining membrane on the inside, and causes the most horrible agony when on the outside. In talking with some of the cases to-day that were burned twelve days ago, and are still suffering intensely and lingering between life and death, they said they would far rather lose an arm or leg. It is like being horribly burned by fire, and after suffering for days, and the nerves and human endurance are exhausted, dying.

The installation and management of the hospital are nothing short of marvelous in so short a time. Of course, it was a well organized base hospital unit that was sent from the States with full equipment. But they walked into the bare, barren former Archbishop's palace, which was used as a library, carried out the one hundred thousand volumes, scrubbed and cleaned the place and set up their equipment. The iron beds and mattresses and springs and bedding are of the best for the purpose. They had five men on the tables at a time in the operating room last night. There are even two dentists' chairs with full equipment, and likewise a very fine X-ray outfit.

*Orleans, France,  
July 27th,  
1918.*

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
July 27th,  
1918.*

This is not a gay subject, but a very important part of the war—much more so, and on a larger scale than one at first imagines. They usually figure on a number of beds equal to ten per cent of the army, which means hospitalization on a staggering scale.

I am happy to know the nation at home is stanchly behind us, as you say and as is shown by the enormous number of well-equipped and trained troops arriving monthly. You can hardly imagine with what a sense of relief we see the pendulum starting to swing the other way.

One of the men who arrived last night says they took two German prisoners, who were women, chained to a cannon to make them fight. This sounds far-fetched, hardly reasonable. But the fact is there are a great many young boys of fifteen or sixteen among the German troops, who when captured offer no resistance and throw up their hands, crying for mercy and "Kamerad."

Next week I will have two gold service chevrons on the sleeve of my left forearm, for a year's service in France.

Poor little Jimmie! This country is full of dogs. I have never before seen so many. The other day, I saw six or eight in one bunch, of all breeds, trotting along dog-fashion, mindless of the war. There seems to be plenty of food—at least for the dogs—

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

and the French resent it if one suggests killing some of the dogs. They must have their dogs loose and without muzzles, even if it is war! You may tell Jimmie that dogs here look upon autos with disdain, and make them turn out of their way.

Lots of love to you all, from your devoted son,

FERD.

*Orleans, France,  
July 27th,  
1918.*

*Paris, France, Aug. 12th, 1918.*



RETURNED last night after a magnificent week at the seashore at Deauville,\* feeling refreshed both mentally and physically; the first leave in a year. This week was like a cooling drink of fresh spring water to a parched man. You cannot imagine the elation and sense of relief to have absolutely nothing to do but amuse oneself and to be free from military duties after so long and steady a grind.

Despite the belief in America the whole of the French male population is not fighting at the front. While there was no dancing nor gambling nor Hungarian orchestras in the restaurants, there were still a lot of charming and well dressed people taking their summer holidays. Owing to the fear of submarines, the north coast is not packed as is the case at Biarritz.

There were a lot of beautiful women from all classes, a number of handsome British officers, as this is in their zone and there is a large camp nearby, and a sprinkling of French and Americans on "leave." However, most of the American officers, and there are a lot of them now, do not get

\*Corresponds to Newport.

beyond Paris, as they prefer to remain there and are not familiar with the beautiful places in the country.

It seems that almost all the people I know in France were there, at least the most interesting ones, and I, as usual, had a wonderful time, free from anxiety and responsibility. It really brought me back to the realization that there was once a time when all of life was not war. The wonderful communiqués of the brilliant successes of our troops have again made everyone take a new lease on life and feel almost light-hearted and gay.

The French women try to believe this is the end, as they really crave peace at any price; but no American here cajoles himself into the belief the job can be finished before Maréchal Foch makes his grand offensive in the spring of 1919, which will no doubt take all of next summer. The war has become a habit and steady grind. We are no longer thinking of advancement and honors. Each individual is a very small infinitesimal part of this great swirling and seething mass, as we have long since learned, each plugging away and keeping up the steady pressure.

Among others, I had the pleasure of meeting and knowing well at Deauville

*Paris, France,  
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# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Paris, France,  
Aug. 12th,  
1918.*

were Baron\* Henri de Rothschild, owner of the magnificent home where the Inter-Allied Club is quartered in the Faubourg St. Honoré; Baron Maurice de Rothschild; Mme. Bernstein, wife of the playwright, young and beautiful; Mme. and Mlle. Vesnitch, wife and daughter of the Servian minister; the Persian minister himself; Mme. François Darblay, the young and beautiful wife of one of the richest ammunition manufacturers in France; Etienne Bunau-Varilla, son of the owner of the "Matin"; Baron de Wardener; M. Letellier, former owner of the Paris "Journal"; the opera singer, Mlle. Merentié, who is coming to the Metropolitan after the war; and Lieut. Paul Jentien with whom I went and whose mother-in-law has a beautiful villa. So you see I was in no sense lonely. Most of these names mean nothing to you but are all prominent in France.

Lieut. Jentien, who has charge of repair parts for American cars in the French Army, of which there are many thousands, says the Pierce-Arrow is the *best* truck built, but is partial to the Ford for light work on account of its extreme cheapness and small loss in case it is wrecked or struck by a shell.

\*Major.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

The enclosed telegram called me back a day sooner than I had expected and means another advancement, in that there were two Liaison Officers at Orleans, Captain Tarn McGrew, uncle of Mimi Scott, and myself. He has been transferred to the front, attached to General Gouraud, commanding the Fourth Army.

I had already asked to be relieved as Provost Marshal, as the double work was more than I could handle, and the Liaison Service is more important, being of a diplomatic nature. I call it the "Military Diplomatic Service."

I had luncheon to-day at Ciro's with three Marine Corps Captains, who have been through the most desperate of the fighting, and Mrs. Swift Fernald, who is nursing at the Red Cross Hospital at Neuilly.

They say that Hennen Le Gendre has distinguished himself for bravery and is making good. He advanced alone under machine gun fire several hundred feet to a wounded soldier calling for help and carried him back to safety on his back. He is very powerful, as you know. He is adjutant to the commanding officer of the Third Battalion of the Fifth Regiment Marines with which we came over. He was commissioned shortly after I was. The fates of war have scattered the three of us who

*Paris, France,  
Aug. 12th,  
1918.*

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Paris, France,  
Aug. 12th,  
1918.*

came over together, Gus, Hennén and me to the four winds. We have all made good and secured our commissions wherever we could. Gus was commissioned in the Engineer Corps and is transport officer at one of the ports. I am commissioned in the Infantry and Hennen in the Marines. Before spring I hope to be transferred to the front so as to take part in Maréchal Foch's big final drive.

Lots of love from,

FERD.

STAFF HEADQUARTERS, FRENCH FIFTH  
ARMY CORPS

*Orleans, France, Aug. 25th, 1918.*



SINCE returning from Deauville I am more engrossed in my fascinating work than ever, keenly enjoying every moment.

While away I spent thirty-six hours on the U. S. S. Matsonia at Brest with brother Jack and his pals, having a very pleasant visit. Brest is as unattractive as all the other seaport cities.

This is where the largest U. S. transports come in, including the colossal ships taken over from the Germans, as it is the only sufficiently deep-water harbor assigned to the Americans. Before the war, Brest was closed to Trans-Atlantic shipping, and was reserved exclusively for a French Naval Base.

The smaller freighters land at the miles of modern wooden docks, built by us for the purpose at Bordeaux, which is forty miles from the coast up the Gironde River.

I have really achieved by a most unforeseen route a long-cherished desire to enter the diplomatic service. Cutting loose from placid Long Island surroundings, and en-

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
Aug. 25th,  
1918.*

listing in the Marines, I was buffeted about as a Corporal on this foaming sea of humanity, unrecognized and unknown, until, thanks to the judgment of Major Straight I was brought to the attention of the banker, Major Harjes, to whom was entrusted the delicate task of forming a Diplomatic Liaison Service with the French Army. This service was already in existence under the guiding hands of such able men as Tardieu, from the French side, in that French Officers known as "French Mission" were attached to our organizations. However, Major Harjes' work was to attach American officers to the French Staffs.

The "Sammie" is loved by the French, because he is a fine soldier and is wrenching a devastated land from the grasp of a treacherous enemy, and because he is at the same time modest. The French press has devoted so much laudatory space to Americans that the awkward tone of occasional apologetic articles complimentary to the English, who are not personally liked by the French, is positively amusing.

With much love to you all,

Devotedly, your son,

FERD.

*Orleans, France, Sept. 15th, 1918.*



OUR two wonderful and sustaining letters of August 19th and 22nd came this morning, just as I was beginning to wonder when I would again hear from you. You know your letters are like oil on a flame. It reminds me of Al Jolson of the Winter Garden who, when he has kept the house in roars of laughter for an hour, says, "That's it! Applaud some more and I will kill myself!" That's the spirit of all the boys over here, and is what makes them unhesitatingly face death for the applause of the loved ones at home. The great majority are thoroly yearning for home, and want to hurry to finish the job, because, despite their homesickness, no one considers for a moment returning before Germany is thoroly crushed and brought pleading to her knees. We do not seriously expect the war to finish before another bloody season. Unless Germany unexpectedly collapses and is consumed by internal war and revolution, there will be the most desperate fighting of all when we reach the German lairs beyond the frontier. I expect it to end in one awful internal convulsion.

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
Sept. 15th,  
1918.*

Since Captain McGrew went to the front, I have a mass of work to attend to. This region extends from twenty-five miles north of Paris to one hundred and twenty-five south and roughly one hundred and fifty east and west, taking in part of the front.

Saturday, Brigadier General Scott came from Saint Aignan with his Chief of Staff to pay a formal call and take luncheon with General de l'Espée. There were also several other high officers at luncheon, besides Madame and Mademoiselle de l'Espée.

Yesterday morning, upon returning from Paris, I found Major-General Bailly, who had motored one hundred and twenty-five miles from Tonnerre, with his Chief of Staff. After luncheon, we held a small private conference at the Quartier Général, General de l'Espée's combined headquarters and home.

Devotedly, your son,

FERD.

*Orleans, France, Sept. 20th, 1918.*



WHILE in Paris, the other day, I bumped into Hennen Le Gendre looking happy and well, but more serious than of yore. It's a miracle how I run into friends by the merest chance. There must be a lot of them over here. He had seen Ferdie III, who is also in the Second Division, at the front a month before, looking dirty, cooty and rough but happy.

Hennen has been through the thickest of all the fighting with the Fifth Marines, and has seen his brother officers and men blown to pieces by bursting shells—the same ones I knew so well.

The Marines and the balance of the Second Division who are used as shock-troops have had no rest, and are rushed from one battle-front to another to storm the enemy and to instill heroism and desperate fighting qualities into less experienced troops. For days, at Château-Thierry, they fought and advanced so rapidly they were separated from the soup field-kitchens and slept uncovered in shot-swept shell-holes, covered with lice, filth and vermin.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
Sept. 20th,  
1918.*

We both enlisted together, expecting to remain together in the Marine Corps, and after struggling for a commission in the Marines, I was given one in the Infantry and landed in a staff position. Hennen said, "For God's sake, Ferdie, don't try any longer to get to the front. Take it from me, as a sincere friend, and stay where you are, where you are rendering better service than you could elsewhere. The horrors have no glamor, and I constantly hope I will not return home terribly maimed, without arms or legs, or blind in both eyes." Hennen has the Distinguished Service Cross for bravery. The neck of the friend with him, and who dined with us, was covered with sores from mustard gas, which had penetrated to the moist, perspiring skin between his collar and gas-mask. This gas is in the shape of a very fine powder, and must be dissolved by moisture to become active.

Pardon me if I seem to dwell on unpleasant subjects, but I know you want unbiased accounts of actual war facts and conditions, and are also interested in hearing at length about myself.

Lots of love to all, from

FERD.

*Orleans, France, Sept. 29th, 1918.*

**A**N elaborate luncheon and fête, press clippings of which are enclosed, was recently given by the French to inaugurate the opening of the Thousandth French Y. M. C. A. Canteen at Cercottes. The American Y. M. C. A. has donated five million dollars for this purpose. Twenty Y. M. C. A. representatives and newspaper men arrived from Paris in a private car for the occasion.

The tank instruction camp of the French Army is at Cercottes, and after luncheon the small six-ton, two-men Renault tanks were put through their trench and hill-climbing maneuvers for the Americans, who were, much to their amusement, permitted to experience the novelty of riding in them. To watch these small war machines, almost like huge beetles, suddenly wheel and turn in their own length and climb and descend nearly perpendicular embankments, is fascinating. They operate in fleets of twenty-five with a large "mother" tank to break down the sides of trenches too broad or deep for them to negotiate. Some are equipped with wireless, some with machine guns, while others

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
Sept. 29th,  
1918.*

have short 75s, used to throw explosive bombs to blow up machine-gun nests.

The French expect to have twenty thousand of these small, deadly engines in the field next spring. The larger forty-ton tanks were not a success, as they were too awkward and more readily hit by the enemy's shell-fire.

Affectionately,

FERD.

*Orleans, France, Oct. 10th, 1918.*



THE arrival of hospital trains of freshly wounded has become a matter of such regular and almost daily occurrence that I no longer pay much attention to them. However, Major Bishop, who is a friend, and who commands the three thousand-bed Base Hospital No. 202, informed me of the arrival of three hundred and fifty marines, thinking I might see some pals. There is a great brotherhood among soldiers far from home, as they are dependent on each other, and form many warm companionships.

Major Bishop said they were the finest lot he had ever seen, and was enthusiastic in their praises. He believes, incidentally, that the usual work over here unfits surgeons for civil practice, as they become careless in performing operations by the wholesale, and operate under conditions that civilians could not survive. The men are brought in like great husky, wounded animals, able to stand almost anything. They are all X-rayed to locate bullets and pieces of shrapnel, and are etherized and operated on without that usual ghastly pallor. Even the following day they have good color and are gay in spite of the daily agony when

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
Oct. 10th,  
1918.*

their wounds are freshly packed and dressed. They recover rapidly and are transferred to nearby convalescent camps, where they loll in the sunshine like healthy pups.

The war is making some millions of sturdy, healthy young men, who, when not fighting, have developed a love for loafing, and many of whom will never wish to again settle down to monotonous steady work.

To talk with these fellows is refreshing. They are free from any blatant manner, and so-called yearning to get to the front to kill Germans. These men who have charged machine-gun nests with bombs, bayonets and shot-guns, slept in shell-craters, and subsisted on "iron rations," and dirty water, and again have charged the enemy at daybreak after twenty-four hours' march, or packed standing in trucks without food, rest or water, are modest. These experiences take the dross and desire to boast out of men.

I enjoy studying the psychology of the French mind, which was apparently sobered beyond recovery, but Germany's peace offer has sent a thrill through the nation like a powerful stimulant to a dying man. To watch the ebb and flow of the public's morale is fascinating. On every side people are now planning wild celebrations, when peace is signed. It resembles prep-

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

arations for New Year's Eve. However, no one wants an immediate peace; and all are unanimous in their desire to continue fighting until Germany is humiliated.

Major J. Tarn McGrew, the American Liaison Officer attached to General Gouraud, writes that recently the Germans captured a town where there were eighty-six American wounded. Within a few hours the Americans retook the town and the eighty-six had been bayoneted. *He saw this.*

Another interesting bit, before I close, is that America's diplomacy and gold hastened Bulgaria in signing peace. We never declared war on Bulgaria or Turkey, and did not recall our Ambassadors, as they were left for the very purpose of playing politics and diplomacy—and they succeeded well.

Devotedly,  
FERD.

*Orleans, France,  
Oct. 10th,  
1918.*

*Orleans, France, Oct. 16th, 1918.*



WAS just about to write you about the epidemic of "Spanish flu," as it is called, when your letter of September 27th arrived, conveying the sad news of Mrs Smith's death. This disease is certainly quick and deadly in its effect and creates a panic among those who have it, as they die frequently in three or four days. My chauffeur is just recovering. He was so scared, two days ago, when I went to see him in the hospital, lest he die in France, that he was almost speechless. Four friends of one of the French officers in my office dined together last week, and now two are dead and buried. The French seem less able to resist it than the Americans.

This reminds me that the Packard has been requisitioned, pursuant to a recent General Order, requiring the requisition of all American privately-owned cars in the A.E.F. This is to make the military control of cars and use of gasoline more rigid. I had what is known as an X number, which means a privately-owned automobile in military service, and was entitled to use all the military gas, oil, tires and service needed. I was entitled to appear before the

requisition board at Bourges, but was too busy to go, so left the price to their discretion. Their word is final, in any case, and I brought the car over for the use of the army, never expecting to take it back. I have been assigned a new closed five-passenger Dodge, which is really more practical for long winter trips, so do not in the least regret the change.

The ever-constant topic of conversation is, of course, the prospects of peace, with all of its conditions and ramifications. The most superb confidence is felt in the ability of Wilson to engineer the situation, and handle the complex questions involved. Not a single envious breath of criticism have I heard.\*

He is the one man on whom rests the responsibility of safely piloting the peace negotiations and exacting humane terms in proportion to the cost of blood and treasure. By the millions of soldiers who have sacrificed their life's blood he is regarded with supreme confidence.

Germany will be in a deplorable condition after the war. It is a pity for her that they were not content with the rapid commercial strides they were making, as they have lost all and much more. The Allied soldiers who have paid so dearly in blood

*Orleans, France,  
Oct. 16th,  
1918.*

\*Apparently opinion has changed.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
Oct. 16th,  
1918.*

and hardships will feel they have fought in vain if the same terms are not exacted of Germany as she offered France in 1914, and which would have made her a vassal state!

Foch, on the other hand, stands supreme, as Joffre formerly did, as the undisputed military genius of the war. It has been the superior ability of the French as strategists that has saved them on numerous occasions from overwhelming defeat, when outnumbered and almost swamped by the onrushing hordes of Germans in their various drives on Paris. At the first battle of the Marne and Verdun, the German High Command was clearly out-generaled, and the saving of Paris was called a miracle.

Nevertheless, after the first battle of the Marne over twenty French Generals, who were not considered fit for active service, were retired. In fact there have been over four hundred Limoged\* since the beginning of the war! Little wonder that those remaining after such a strenuous weeding process, and five years of gruelling field experience have developed real geni!

Your devoted son,

FERD.

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\*So called because the proceedings are held at Limoge.

*Orleans, France, Oct. 24th, 1918.*



LAST evening I had the pleasure of dining with Major Frank Baker, Q. M. C., brother of the Secretary of War. He came from Headquarters at Tours especially to see me about the requisition of a factory needed by the Chief Quartermaster. It was a rainy Sunday afternoon, and not knowing who it was, I had him shown up to my room where we were sitting around a little log fire, three of us. We took him in the Dodge to the country estate of some French friends for tea, with whom he was delighted, and upon returning had dinner at a most extraordinary little restaurant down by the river front, called Auberge St. Jacques, where one enters through a real horse stable past the horses. It is like the unique places one reads about, but never sees, and the food is really the best in Orleans. A Major Clark, from the Inspector General's Department at Chaumont, who is here investigating the Liaison Service, joined us. He is most high in his praise of the Franco-American conditions in this Region, and says he has visited no Region run so smoothly, without friction, and with so little evident effort.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
Oct. 24th,  
1918.*

A description of the Liaison in the Fifth Region would be incomplete without mentioning such capable French officers engaged in this work as Lieutenant Nastrog, in charge of the propaganda of "French Homes," whose purpose is to introduce convalescent Americans to French families, and to conduct motor excursions so as to familiarize them with some of the historic and scenic beauties of France.

Captain Galezowski of the Service de Santé, a well-known Parisian specialist, who works with the American Lieutenant May, a venerable and loyal American of Alsatian birth, speaking French, English and German, all with equal fluency and so marked an accent that one cannot detect which is easier for him to speak, are doing most valuable work in hospitalization.

Lieutenant Geniest of the Génie handles all American Requisitions of French property.

Lieutenant Mossier has been delegated by the Ministry of War to our office to assist the French end of the U. S. Renting Requisition and Claims Service.

Lieutenant Etienne Jouvencel of the Intendance, who is in charge of all Franco-American Quartermaster affairs, is a young, enthusiastic nobleman with real American energy.

In addition to the above officers are the French Missions attached to the American Camps at Gièvres, Romarantin, Tonnerre, and Ancy-le-Franc. Particularly prominent among these is Lieutenant Bernard de Souches at Romarantin, to whose indefatigable zeal is due a considerable portion of the success in building up this enormous aviation construction camp.

Lieutenant John M. Gundry, Jr., Provost Marshal of Orleans, and Lieutenant Henry Bahnsen, Intelligence Officer, handle Regional Liaison Police and "contre espionage" matters in connection with Lieutenant Viguerie.

The above cosmopolitan officers, all of the Americans speaking French and most of the French speaking English, who are subject to Captain de Waldener's and my directions, as heads of the Regional Liaison Service, form a congenial little circle of pals, who keep things running smoothly and handle the multitude of often knotty Franco-American questions arising to be settled.

To the Chief-of-Staff, Colonel Delacroix, Intendant Militaire Duhamel, and General de l'Espée, the greatest appreciation is due for their cordial and helpful attitude toward Americans. General de l'Espée, whose wife is American, devotes the major portion of

*Orleans, France,  
Oct. 24th,  
1918.*

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
Oct. 24th,  
1918.*

his time to the cultivation of friendly relations and entertainment of American officers.

As an example of how varied is my work, on Saturday afternoon at two o'clock, I attended the funeral of a French officer, who had died of Spanish flu and pneumonia, in four days. As one of the pallbearers I walked at one corner of the hearse and carried the silver cord attached to the mantle covering the casket. We walked with the hearse, including the family, guard of honor, officers and friends, from the military hospital, to the ancient Cathedral, where the funeral services were held, and from there to the cemetery.

Upon returning, I stopped at one of the large French barracks, Coligny, which we are taking over for hospital purposes. As usual, wooden barracks are being constructed in the court yard to increase the capacity. I had secured two hundred and fifty Austrian prisoners of war (P. G.'s as they are called—*prisonniers de guerre*), mere boys of sixteen to eighteen years, from the French, to aid in the work. They are meek looking, undersized little fellows, apparently completely subdued and suffering from homesickness more than anything else. One of our men would be a match for about three of them, and could easily slap him with his open hand

and knock him down. One could hardly help feeling sorry for them, the victims of a crushing, steam-roller military machine. They surely showed no signs of malice and stood around in a daze like ignorant animals, willingly obeying the jovial southern negroes bossing the job and reveling in whitewash. I gave them several sharp commands in German to which they have always been accustomed, to cheer and wake them up, and make them feel at home, and they jumped to attention and huddled like frightened sheep.

When I returned to my office, I found the commanding officer of the hospitals and several others waiting to see me on various subjects and remained until seven o'clock.\* Sunday I was with Major Baker, and Monday I made a one hundred and thirty-mile motor trip to Montoire accompanied by a French officer, where we are constructing hospital barracks for twenty thousand beds.

Tuesday morning, I took the train for Paris, to see the Under Secretary of State regarding the subject Major Baker wanted settled. After wiring a favorable report to the Quartermaster General at Tours, I stopped at Prunier's for a good fish dinner and found the place crowded, with a long waiting list for tables. The food is con-

*Orleans, France,  
Oct. 24th,  
1918.*

\*The usual hour.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
Oct. 24th,  
1918.*

sidered good and reasonable. The check was twenty-one francs, including ten per cent *taxe-de-luxe* and tip, for a dozen oysters, whole broiled lobster, slice of roast beef and boiled potatoes, with bread but no butter. At the *Café de Paris*, *Ciro's* or *Henri's* it would have been twice as much.

At the *Casino de Paris*, later, the most popular music hall, we succeeded by chance in securing two orchestra seats in the thirteenth row for fifteen francs each. They are sold on the sidewalk by speculators for twenty-five francs and the production rivaled in gorgeousness the *Ziegfeld Follies* in peace times. The place was packed, the aisles filled and standing room banked fifteen deep. It is said by those who ought to know that France, owing to the money poured into the country by the Allied armies, has maintained a very considerable prosperity. The average French individual does not seem to have suffered financially enough to have caused him to make any considerable outward change in his mode of living.

Already a few brilliant electric street lights are burning on some of the boulevards, and the nervous strain of Parisians has relaxed. Those with a slight sore throat or grippe, however, work up a burning fever with hysterical fear of "*la grippe espagnole*."

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

Paris is a city of fads, many of the ribbon strips of paper criss-crossed and fantastically pasted on the windows in the belief that they would help save the glass from breaking from the concussion of exploding bombs, still remain. Some enterprising shop keepers in their desire to excel their competitors in artistic effects painted the strips!

*Orleans, France,  
Oct. 24th,  
1918.*

Peace celebrations are being arranged and the Minister of War has ordered "Victory Reviews" held in all garrison towns of France on November 3rd to boost the Fourth Emprunt or Liberty Loan. We have already, in America, had as many and as large Liberty Loans as France. Within a week after peace is signed Paris will be as gay as ever, and the year or so following will be the biggest tourist years in her history. I tried at three hotels before I could get a room, the Maurice, Castiglione, and Continental. The Castiglione two years ago was entirely refurnished, as was also the Continental. The artistic effects secured by the French in remodeling and redecorating old buildings are remarkable.

It is an inspiring sight to see the long lines of captured German cannon, hub to hub, lining both sides of the Avenue des Champs Élysées from Place de la Concorde to the Étoile. They are also packed

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
Oct. 24th,  
1918.*

in the Place de la Concorde almost solid, all descriptions and kinds, battered, camouflaged and shell-torn. This is the first sign of real war I have seen in Paris, and is done to help the sale of the Victory Loan.

Your devoted son,

FERD.

*Orleans, France, Nov. 1st, 1918.*



THE operation of the French law of "Requisition," which empowers military authorities to take any private property needed, and which I am frequently required to exercise, is most interesting.

The proprietor is simply served with an order to move out. This, however, is done according to definite regulations, and the compensation is later fixed by a commission, consisting of an Engineer Officer, who has made blue-prints of the property, two officers from the Intendance (Quarter Master's Department) and two competent civilians chosen by the officers. The decisions of this Board are always fair and final, with no recourse to the courts.

"Requisition" is for temporary military occupancy, and the property is returned to its owner, restored to its original condition, when no longer needed.

This is the only manner in which private property can be taken for military purposes. For the construction of permanent public improvements, such as railways, the Government has the right to condemn and purchase outright. This is called "expropriation," but is more complicated and

LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
Nov. 1st,  
1918.*

requires a process of law, so is not employed  
for urgent military purposes.

Affectionately, your devoted son,

FERD.

*Orleans, France, Nov. 4th, 1918.*



WHEN the time has passed for your letters to arrive, I lose enthusiasm in my work, as if something were lacking. It is almost a subconscious feeling, difficult to define; but without the regular approbation of the folks at home, the effort all seems so hopeless and vague.

I was feeling lonely when your letters arrived this Sunday morning, but my spirits have steadily risen all day, in feeling that you, although far away, are earnestly interested and lovingly awaiting my return. It makes the effort worth while.

The "Victory Day" reviews of troops were cancelled by the Ministry of War "owing to the Spanish influenza," the real diplomatic reason probably being on account of the peace pourparlers.

The luncheon—of which I am enclosing an invitation, place card and menu—was given any way. General de l'Espée said, in his after-luncheon toast, which was made in both French and English, that it would be a calamity to have a premature peace before Germany is crushed beyond ever regaining her power. He said, calmly, but with powerful conviction, that after the war

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
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1918.*

of arms, an economic war must be waged, and bitter hatred instilled into our children's hearts.

I sat at table with six generals, four French and two American, nineteen in all. One of the generals pleasantly inquired why I didn't have more rank, and I replied that my gold bars "must be soldered on." He volunteered to take the matter up and see what could be done. Nothing has come of my recommendation for promotion several months ago.

I have returned from a two-days' trip with a French officer, Lieutenant Mossier, calling on the Préfet, French Mayors, and American Town Majors, advising them how civilian claims against the American Army, for private property stolen or damaged, must be handled—not exaggerated, and forwarded to the Renting, Requisition and Claims Service at Tours. There are R. R. & C. officers for this work but I am always careful to see that all Franco-American business in the Region functions well.

There are thousands of claims pouring in, for every imaginable kind of loss, amounting to millions of dollars, which means a great harvest for the French fortunate enough to have had anything damaged by the Americans. Claims are frequently based on sentimental values, somewhat similar to the following: A passing American truck

shook out a window pane, which fell and cut the dog, which knocked over an antique table, originally belonging to the great-grandfather, therefore having great historical and sentimental value; and, therefore, the claim for the broken window pane is one hundred francs. One director of a Haras (governmental stud stables) had his children's pet white donkey killed by a side-car. The donkey had been brought from Algiers when small, and raised, so they had great affection for it, and it would require a thousand francs to soothe their feelings and replace the donkey. The director has since died, while the claim is awaiting adjustment. Claims are also made for stolen bottles of beer, or grapes picked from vineyards by passing soldiers.

Nothing is too small to overlook claiming for, and exaggerating the amount. I don't know if the R. R. & C. officers will ever get home after the war. But our liberal policy is to pay for anything having the slightest indication of justice, in order to pecuniarily satisfy and maintain the amiable feelings of the people for whom our boys are ungrudgingly pouring out their life's blood and drenching the fields of France.

Lots of love to you all from your devoted son,

FERD.

*Orleans, France,  
Nov. 4th,  
1918.*

*Orleans, France, Nov. 14th, 1918.*



PEACE has come so unexpectedly that those who should know—despite the claims to the contrary, of those regularly prognosticating for the past four years—that we are in a daze.

Events have happened during the past week with such lightning-like rapidity, and the issues involved are of such magnitude that our minds have been in a whirl. It is almost too much for our mere human minds to comprehend in a few short hours that this strain of the past year and a half has abruptly snapped. It leaves a blank, vague feeling. We devour the one-sheet newspapers and telegraphic communiqués as if in a dream. “There must be a catch somewhere.” This feeling is so strong that there is an impulse to go on—on—on!

The peace to follow will impose such drastic terms the Germans cannot recover in generations. Germany is doomed, as none can realize without knowing the French.

The armistice was sudden, because those here were firmly resolved to continue another three to six months. Determination to go on to complete victory was so strong

that Americans, especially, did not permit themselves to entertain will-o'-the-wisp peace hopes.

For two days and nights the people and soldiers have given themselves up to frenzied celebrations—every one in their mad delight trying to outdo the others in casting aside the mantle of gloom and depression which has so long hung over this depressed nation.

Paris is more crowded and jammed than ever. Rooms in hotels, and almost all tables in the restaurants, must be engaged days in advance.

Now that the armistice has been signed, I can describe some of the activities in the Fifth Region.

At Romarantin is the great aviation construction camp where all American planes are assembled. There are miles of enormous steel buildings and fifteen thousand Americans.

At Gièvres, adjoining, is the Great Quartermaster Depot where one thousand seven hundred freight cars per day are handled in and out. There are over four hundred miles of switch tracks, one of the largest refrigerating plants in the world, where two thousand tons of meat can be received and shipped daily, and twenty-five thousand Americans are employed. Gièvres

*Orleans, France,  
Nov. 14th,  
1918.*

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
Nov. 14th,  
1918.*

and Romarantin camps occupy a strip of land eight by four miles in area, and these plants have risen out of the bare farm land as if by magic. They are the wonders of military France, as are some of our other various engineering, dock, railroad, and transportation remarkable accomplishments.

At Montargis was the Headquarters for requisitioning the five thousand houses.

At St. Aignan is the First Replacement Depot Division of thirty thousand.

At Tonnerre and Ancy-le-Franc and surrounding towns were two training divisions.

At Montoire a twenty thousand-bed hospital camp is under construction.

At Orleans is a three thousand-bed hospital.

Besides four enormous French garrisons and the French salvage plants employing seven thousand, mostly women, where clothing and equipment of every imaginable description is received in trainloads from the front and remade to look like new.

At Blois is the Officers' Casual Camp.

At Seguerny and a half dozen surrounding towns is the First Signal Corps Depot.

And at twenty-five other places in the ten thousand square miles of the Region are hospitals, veterinary hospitals, signal corps, foresters and detachments of every

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

kind, all of which must be visited in order to settle local disputes which have grown beyond their ability, experience or authority to handle, and in all, amounting to over one hundred thousand troops.

Lots of love to all from

FERD.

*Orleans, France  
Nov. 14th,  
1918.*

*Orleans, France, Nov. 26th, 1918.*



HAVE just been playing "Some Day Waiting Will Cease," and it affects me the same as you. Your popular music has arrived at a moment most opportune. You scarcely can realize what it means to us, the war ending as abruptly as it began. Life had become bereft of all that was sentimental, beautiful and happy, and was one long, barren waste of destruction. Now the most dazzling sunshine suddenly bursts forth in all its resplendent glory, like peace and calm after a mighty tempest, which mocks the insignificance of puny human strength.

But the air is not entirely purified. There are still distant rumblings of bitterness and hate from Germany, who does not willingly bow to the fact that they are a people conquered by force of arms, and who, because their military power is crushed, must descend from their coveted place in the sun. The Allied military leaders harbor no hallucinations on the subject, and know they are dealing with a race which does not hesitate to stoop to the lowest treachery.

The fangs of the beast are pulled, but she dies hard, and in her convulsive death-gurgle there are many who believe there will

still be fighting. It will mean going in with machine guns. The French have been received in Alsace-Lorraine with the wildest bursts of enthusiasm, but when it comes to occupying Germany itself—and they realize they are under the iron heel of which they have so prided themselves—it is doubtful just how they will act.

Since the signing of the armistice, two weeks ago, the weather has been brilliant, as if a sign of approval from the Almighty. Paris has burst forth in all her former air of gaiety, and never have I seen the boulevards so swarming with stylishly dressed, happy, beautiful women, like bees from their hives after a rain. I didn't know so many existed, and fail to comprehend where the money comes from. The prices of everything are double or triple those before the war, but that apparently makes no difference. I wired two days in advance for accommodations at the Hotel Castiglione, and tried in the following nine: Maurice, Continental, Edward VII, Grand, Westminster, Mirabeau, Majestic, Mercedes and Crillon, on the Place de la Concorde, where I, by chance, thankfully at last secured a place to sleep. This hotel has since been taken for the American Peace Commission. The Élysée Palace has been occupied as American army offices for the past year.

*Orleans, France,  
Nov. 26th,  
1918.*

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
Nov. 26th,  
1918.*

The amount of money spent in France by the Allied armies has made her rich. It is the tendency of fighting men to spend lavishly, and we and our armies have received nothing without paying for it dearly.

The boulevards at night are a blaze of light and never have I seen in the theaters, which are packed, more gorgeously staged productions. Uniforms of French officers are conspicuous for their absence as they ravenously seize the first opportunity when "on leave" to wear civilian clothes.

"Leaves" for the French have been increased from one to three weeks in every four months, while ours remain, as before, one week for the same period, when one is fortunate enough to get it. I had one week last summer, during the past fifteen months, but soon hope to have another. There has been a tendency to comment on the number of American officers on leave in Paris, but the poor devils have only public places to go, such as hotels, theaters, and boulevards, while the Frenchmen are absorbed into their own homes all over France. The Englishmen return to their homes in England.

The one thing that seriously lacks is taxicabs, as the cars are all old and worn out, and the cabmen must be paid any price they demand regardless of the taximeter rate.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

You can count on knitted dresses remaining in style, by the way, for some time to come, as most of France's woolen mills were in the North and have been destroyed, but not the knitting mills. One Rue de la Paix modiste received orders for seventy evening gowns the first seven days after the armistice.

As for my returning home, it will be as sudden as the beginning of the war, signing of the armistice, or my departure for France. But "Some Day Waiting Will Cease" and orders to sail for America, God's Country, the "land of the free and the home of the brave" will come.

Lots of love to all, from your devoted son,

FERD.

*Orleans, France,  
Nov. 26th,  
1918.*

*Orleans, France, Dec. 4th, 1918.*



HOW I do hope Jackie will be home for Christmas. Gracious, how the time flies! Three weeks, tonight, before Christmas! According to the "Stars and Stripes," "Dad's Christmas letter" should have been written over a week ago, but as this goes by French post,\* it will arrive in time. So many things come driving into my mind, and so much I feel in this lonely garrison town, so far from home and all that is dear. Life is so changed—a year and a half away from love and sympathy and the finer things of life.

Yesterday, General de l'Espée entertained Colonel Symmonds, commanding the great quartermaster camp at Gièvres, which will be a model in the future, at a small informal luncheon for eight. I attended as usual.

The host always sits at the side of the table—not end—and the hostess, when there is one, on the opposite side, and if there is no hostess, the guest of honor occupies her place, and then the other guests at the right and left of the host and guest of honor, according to their impor-

\*Because attached to the French Army.

tance or rank, which is very minutely followed. I was at the side of Colonel Symmonds, who is a plain, hard-working West Pointer, commanding twenty-five thousand men at the enormous plant of Gièvres. I know the Colonel well, having frequently messed at his table at luncheon on my many trips to Gièvres.

Gièvres is forty-five miles from here, by motor, through the most famous hunting section of France, known as the Sologne. It was here that François I, in the fifteenth century, built the palace of Chambord, in the center of his hunting park, surrounded by twenty-eight miles of stone wall. The stone walls around these properties were for the purpose of keeping the game in. I have eaten a lot of partridge this fall. The game is carefully guarded, and is not permitted to be killed by peasants.

There are a great many "maisons-de-chasse"—hunting lodges—quite pretentious, and other "properties" and châteaux in this section, and, fortunately I am acquainted with some of the most prominent, including the Capitaine et Baronne Charles Pierrebourg, Comtesse de Saint Sauveur, Lieut. et Mme. Serge André, Lieut. Guy Arnoux, the well known illustrator, and others, who all have beautiful places and with whom I frequently visited during the

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Dec. 4th,  
1918.*

*Orleans, France,  
Dec. 4th,  
1918.*

summer. They are most hospitable and charming Parisians, although living quietly in their country homes during the war. French family life usually so difficult for foreigners to enter, particularly in the country, is delightful. One wealthy widow with three daughters-in-law, their children and other visiting relatives had a family of fifteen children and ten adults regularly at table. The château was amply large and not crowded.

I couldn't resist taking the delighted children—loaded in the car like a jolly bouquet—some almost for the first time in their young lives, for a little spin on a quiet part of the country road.\* I suppose this was in a way pardonable as I was cultivating the entente-cordiale—at least I hope the results of my liaison work have justified it. My camaraderie and close friendships with the French have many times repaid the time spent—aside from the charming associations.

To-day there was a Staff after-luncheon reception for a French Major who is returning to Paris to civil life. They are all frantic to get back to civil life and productive occupations after almost five years lost. "Five years older, five years gone out of the

\*Gasoline is unprocurable for pleasure purposes. This is a great handicap for people living in the country at some distance from the railway station.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

hearts of our lives," is what one hears on all sides in confidential conversations.

The women are older, five years of mourning and sadness, which everyone bitterly regrets and realizes the total loss of these never-to-be-recovered years. "All for nothing."

To-morrow General de l'Espée receives at luncheon Major-General Wright, commanding the Eighty-first Division billeted at Ancy-le-Franc, recently returned from the front, at which I shall be present. I am accompanied now by my assistant or aide, a pleasant young artillery officer of twenty-three, from Albany, who fought at St. Mihiel, Second Lieutenant John D. W. Peltz. He was in the class of '18 at Yale and his mother was born in France, where he has lived.

We have a cosmopolitan lot in the Liaison Service, about eighty officers—no enlisted men. They are, roughly, one-third in the Regions, one-third with the chief Liaison Officer and attached to the French ministerial offices in Paris, and one-third with the armies.

Thanksgiving I spent in Paris, with Captain Baron de Waldener, with whom I am associated—a charming nobleman of forty-two. I dined with the Marquise de Gasket and afterwards we went to the Cinema in

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## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Orleans, France,  
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the Champs Élysées and saw Mary Pickford. All the best movies now are American, and the French producers think they are doing well when they spend thirty or forty thousand francs on a film. They say American movie actors are better than the French, because they are more animated and energetic! The Marquise is a handsome, stately widow of thirty-five, whose husband was killed two years ago. He was a pal of De Waldener. De Waldener is of an old Alsatian family, as the name implies, and he expects to soon return to buy back some of their properties which were disposed of to the Germans in '71.

After the Cinema, we went to a dance given by the Henri Hottinguers, for their débutante daughter, in Rue de la Baume. Mme. de Waldener is his sister, and they are said to be the richest protestant family in France.\* The house is a palace and two hundred danced on the ground floor.

Among others present were Ambassador Sharpe's daughter, the daughters of Princess Murat, Mlle. Hottinguer—who has a dot of half a million francs' income—and Mlle. de l'Espée. She was accompanied by her mother, as many were. There are many important dances to follow, to which I received verbal invitations. American

\*M. Hottinguer is at the head of the Bank of France.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

officers, for whom the dance was said to be given, were in the predominance, as the young French officers have not yet returned from the front. According to French custom, one calls and leaves cards for all ladies to whom he is presented. In preparing her dinner and dance lists, the hostess is then free to invite whom she pleases.

My prayers and thoughts are always with you, and I hope to return before spring, some fine day when you least expect it.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and much love to you all from,

Devotedly your son and brother,

FERD.

*Orleans, France,  
Dec. 4th,  
1918.*

U. S. OFFICERS' COMBAT REPLACEMENT  
DEPOT*Gondrecourt (Meuse), Dec. 24th, 1918.*

**A**FTER receiving orders relieving me from further duty at Orleans for return to the U. S. it took two days to make the official round of formal "au revoir" calls. Colonel Delacroix, Chief of Staff, gave a small informal farewell luncheon for eight in my honor, and there was much good fellowship and many compliments exchanged.

This is Christmas Eve, and my mind is thousands of miles from here. It is six o'clock, and the officers, coming from supper, are drifting into the officers' Y. M. C. A. club barracks, dripping with rain, and flecked with snow—the first of the season.

It has been dark since four o'clock, and supper is served at five-thirty. By seven o'clock it has been dark for hours, and one can truthfully refer to the "long winter evenings."

The camaraderie existing in the army is magnificent, and is the great compensation for the separation from home and God's country. The realization of this has been more forcibly impressed upon me during

the past three days, since returning to the American troops, after passing eight months with the French Army.

On these bleak, cold, wind and rain-swept hills, past which so recently swept one of the greatest and bloodiest holocausts in history, is established in heart and soul a miniature America—an independent American barrack city—far removed from European thought, ideas and influences.

The average American soldier has little opportunity for seeing or knowing anything about the French, except for slight contact with the peasants. This is because when he is not on the battle field he is billeted in the miserable peasant villages behind the lines, and rarely has "leave" to travel.

I have been released from further service with the Chief Liaison Officer, for return to the U. S., as my work is finished, and I am deeply touched at this sacred time by being back among my own people. It again gives me a chance to know and fraternize with these whole-hearted American characters, honest, magnificent manhood. This Army represents the purest and finest we possess in the American nation!

While returning thru Paris the other day, I saw Wilson, Pershing and Bliss pass on their return from the formal reception

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(Meuse),  
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## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

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given in Wilson's honor by the City of Paris at the Hôtel de Ville. The boulevards were lined with French troops and cavalry to hold the crowds back and render the guests royal military honors. Wilson has a grace in lifting his hat which no imperial ruler can equal. His famous smile and polished manner immediately endeared him to the French of all classes, who call him Emperor. How they love holidays and fêtes! In nine days there were six national holidays, four for visiting Allied royalty, including Wilson, and two Sundays.

Several days later, upon the arrival of the King of Italy, shortly before the hour, all the side streets leading to the boulevards were black with tens of thousands scurrying in the rain to see him pass.

The barrack is now a mass of officers talking, reading and writing, like a college dormitory, with some one drumming the piano at one end and the victrola going at the other. The canteen has been opened, and they are waiting in line and crowding around, drinking hot chocolate. Is a soldier's stomach ever filled?

Stoessel\* has commenced playing, which recalls with a thrill that it is Christmas Eve. The barrack is in enraptured stillness—no

\*Of the Boston Symphony.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

other indication of the birth of Christ, except a small tree—but one realizes the sacredness of this night in this weird, out-of-the-way place of the world more than in the turmoil of a great city.

Your devoted son,

FERD.

*Gondrecourt  
(Meuse),  
Dec. 24th,  
1918.*

*Nice, France, Jan. 5th, 1919.*



HERE I am, on a week's leave, in the hospital with a slight case of the mumps. Just arrived with the prospect of passing ten days.

Things happen so rapidly and unexpectedly in the army that I never attempt to forecast the future, as all goes by opposites. Little did I expect to be a patient in a French Military Hospital, although I have visited many where our men were left in a dying condition by passing American hospital trains.

The last week at Orleans, I completed a three hundred and fifty-mile tour of inspection, including French hospitals, by auto. Our men were lonely, as might be expected, and condemn the hospitals as dirty and unsanitary. The French haven't the money to do things in the lavish American manner, and the doctors are tired after five years of incessant grind. It is the doctors who have done the most tedious work, and that of the French doctors has been monumental! One can comprehend only in a vague way what the hospitalization for an army of four millions\* means, unless he has actually seen. French trained nurses are not

\*French Army.

as high a class of women as nurses in America, and are not as well respected. However, there are usually a few local ladies nursing in the Bénévole or Charity Red Cross Hospitals, and one can invariably distinguish them.

It is like a breath of fresh air to meet and talk with these cheerful, charming, serious-minded girls, doing a work of mercy. It is not a fad or fancy, but after all these years of suffering they take it as naturally as if it were all that is to be expected in life. They have usually lost some one of their immediate family—brother or fiancé. It has been the old, retired and rich families living on their “rentes” which have lost most by the war. Their fortunes have been materially reduced, while the high cost of living has doubled and tripled. It has been the storekeepers and working classes who have profited by greatly increased wages and increased business. Soldiers certainly spend money like the proverbial “drunken sailor.”

Prices of rooms and meals are posted in all hotels and restaurants, as required by law, to prevent extortion, as sentiment has not stood in the way of avaricious tradespeople exploiting American generosity—especially in regions not suffering from the invader. I regret to say that the aver-

*Nice, France,  
Jan. 5th,  
1919.*

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Nice, France,  
Jan. 5th,  
1919.*

age American, for this and sundry other reasons, has not a high opinion of the French, and their one desire is to finish the job and return home. The French Government, on the other hand, has carried on a well-organized propaganda, called "French Homes," to systematically introduce Americans into French families. About ten thousand French girls are said to have married Americans.

It seems that Europe is determined to maintain the same standard of living as before the war, despite the doubled cost, and the bulk of the men having earned nothing for so long. The idea seems to be to spend money as long as it lasts.

This contagious hospital is a lonely place, an amusement ice-skating palace in a beautiful park in the suburbs of Nice, partitioned into small rooms called "boxes," without ceilings. All that is separating me from the spinal-meningitis on one side and a case of diphtheria on the other are light seven-foot pine partitions!

I have a Brazilian army doctor; there were three hundred of them sent over for service with the French Army. Evidently the love and sympathy of the entire world went forth to aid stricken France in her dire distress.

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

NEXT DAY—TUESDAY. Well, the novel experiences of a soldier are many. I had to jump out of the bed and pull it across the concrete floor out of the heavy shower that leaked through the roof during a torrential rain. Luckily I wasn't very sick or minus a leg. My nurse has only fourteen patients; formerly she had thirty-four!

Major Willard D. Straight, my former beloved chief in the War Risk Bureau, has died of pneumonia. He had a brilliant career for a man of forty.

The number of people who have died, owing to overwork and reduced powers of resistance and a treacherous climate, is shocking. I really never realized what a damnable climate this is. Half the battle country is under water from almost incessant rains during the past four months. The clouds raised for only a week when the armistice was signed, as if a Divine token of approval from the Almighty.

At last the warm, balmy and caressing sunshine of beautiful Nice makes the convalescents want to bask forever and look out on the clear blue Mediterranean and wonder what it all means!

Lots of love to you all, from

FERD.

*Nice, France,  
Jan. 5th,  
1919.*

*Paris, France, Jan. 20th, 1919.*



FIND that some of the French customs are quaint and certainly opposite to our own, for example:

It is not "étiquette" to wait until all at table are served before one starts eating, each commencing as soon as he is served, thereby avoiding an awkward pause. If one is timid about this he is apt to delay the service or go hungry, for the plates are removed rapidly as the courses are finished, which makes the service almost continuous and certainly quicker and more satisfactory, especially when the meal is divided into many courses, as is customary.

Forks are *always* placed with the prongs pointing *down*, and knives and forks are criss-crossed on the plate—prongs down!

Neatly written *menus* are placed on the table in private homes, at formal luncheons or dinners and frequently informal ones, and are carefully *read* by the guests,—evidencing a polite interest on their part.

The above usages appear unimportant, but are equally as rigid as our own, and their infraction regarded equally as ill-bred.

Even in the best homes, fruit such as large apples and pears, is generally cut in

half before being "passed," which is surely more practicable than our own extravagant method.

Coffee with hot milk is served in the morning in a large *bowl*, similar to a porridge bowl, using a table-spoon instead of a tea-spoon.

In the Bordeaux district, the ancient peasant custom was to drink white wine for breakfast instead of coffee as it is the product of the country, and naturally more easily obtainable and cheaper.

One not desiring coffee after a meal is at liberty to ask for a cup of tilleul, a fashionable and mild hot beverage slightly digestive and laxative in effect. This is a tea and is made from dried linden blossoms; it also acts as a sedative inducing sleep and is altogether a very pleasing beverage, taken after dinner.

The French always sleep with the windows, iron shutters, and draperies tightly closed even in the Summer, owing to their abject fear of night air. The American method of sleeping with outside ventilation is regarded as suicidal, and when the maid enters one's room in the morning in private homes and finds the windows open, it is usually the cause of ejaculations and astonishment, and kind advice that one *must not* do it. Their increased health since sleeping in

*Paris, France,  
Jan. 20th,  
1919.*

Paris, France,  
Jan. 20th,  
1919.

the trenches does not seem to have altered their views on ventilation.

A young U. S. Army engineer who as a civilian had worked on the ventilation problem of the New York subway, said: "I expected, when I came to France, I might get some new ideas on street car ventilation, but found they had solved the problem simply by shutting the cars up tight and having none!"

While talking with a Baroness and Countess, I received some startling information on "marriage contracts." It appears there are two laws under which the marriage contract, which is obligatory, can be drawn. The old law provides for the wife's dowry becoming the property outright of her husband on the wedding day, and the other for her to retain an interest! One of these beautiful heiresses, who had married a poor nobleman, told me that she would have regarded it as an insult to her husband if she had married him under any but the old law! The other, who had married a poor nobleman, said: "I brought my husband a yearly income of fifty thousand francs under the old law, from which he gave me one hundred francs per month spending money, and I was *content!*" These were both clever, charming women from the rich bourgeoisie class who had

## LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

married titles. These are not isolated cases.

There is another law for tradespeople, under which the husband and wife can become legal business partners, sharing the profits like any two partners owning a joint interest.

Ordinarily the interest from a girl's dowry is supposed to equal about one-fifth of her husband's earning power. And girls very rarely can get married without a dowry, even among the poorest classes, who formerly frequently dispensed with a ceremony owing to the complicated procedure, legal formality and attendant cost. The laws have fortunately recently been modified somewhat in this respect.

Dowries are small formalities which were dispensed with by our American boys when bringing home French brides!

After they become twenty-five, the girls "marry Ste. Catherine," and Ste. Catherine's Day (April 30th) is a festive occasion when the shop girls wear flowers, fancy hats and ribbons and have a jolly time all day in the streets according to French fashion.

As ever your son,

FERD.

*Paris, France,  
Jan. 20th,  
1919.*

*Gondrecourt, France, Jan. 30th, 1919.*



HE bottom has dropped out and everybody is clamoring to get home. There was a scramble to get on the Peace Commission, but this has died down.

It is sad to see the machinery of the Liaison Service, about which we were all so enthusiastic during the exciting times of last summer, disintegrating and going to pieces.

Lieutenant-Colonel Harjes who has gone to Monte Carlo with his family, has never returned to the office since the motor accident of last August when his hip was broken, but has continued to direct the Service thru Captain Phil Livermore, Deputy Chief Liaison Officer.

With a slight stretch of the imagination, one could believe this a stag winter country-house party, or Muldoon's family training camp for obese gentlemen; only these are young and brimming with the effervescent spirits of health and youth, and already "fit."

After an easy day of several lectures on military subjects, and a long hike over hard, frozen country roads, and five-thirty o'clock supper, they lounge, read, talk and smoke until an early bed-hour.

There is plenty of amateur musical talent and movies. An officer at present is playing the piano, surrounded by an admiring group, among whom are several good voices.

This is almost an Elysian picture, but when you get this many American youths together, no matter in what remote part of the world, their indomitable Americanism is bound to come to the surface. All fret and are anxious to return to their organizations, most of which are in Germany, and also have a vague, dim longing to return home. But this is suppressed, largely for the practical reason that they will have to seek work when they leave the army. Many feel, now that the arduous fighting period has passed, like enjoying a well-earned respite; however, a profound yearning for home secretly exists deep in every heart.

As the evening's movies in the "Auditorium," or adjoining barracks, were just announced, and there was a concerted movement in that direction, including the ragtime officer at the piano, his place was taken by one more sentimentally inclined, who is exquisitely playing "The End of a Perfect Day." Now, half an hour later, the movie crowd is back again in full possession of the piano. While serious-minded, they are with their pent-up dynamic force like a

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France,  
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# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Gondrecourt,  
France,  
Jan. 30th,  
1919.*

pack of eager young hounds. These are some of the men who from quiet civilian life, with little military training, were thrown in at Château-Thierry, with orders to stop, regardless of sacrifice of life—which the French had learned to so carefully preserve—the ferocious drive which the Germans had intended should end the war by crushing France.

As ever your son,

FERD.

*Nancy, France, Feb. 5th, 1919.*



IMPROVED the opportunity to come via Nancy, which is on the Alsatian frontier, and was astonished to find a large, flourishing city, with more happy faces than I have seen previously. It appears more German than French, and the people have such round, pleasant German faces that one is startled when they speak French.

It isn't correct to say they are German, nor French, for they are Alsatian. In the newer sections, the houses are modern German in architecture. There is a marked difference between this hybrid city and the old French town of Orleans, where French is found in its purest.

One wonders why Rheims was pulverized and this large city at the front remains almost untouched. There were dozens of houses blown up by aerial bombs, but the city is still intact. The simple reason is that it was regarded as future German property, and was, therefore, spared the fate of others less fortunate. The public markets were filled with good food, at high prices, but not higher than at home. The finest frozen beef was shown, so marked, for

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Nancy, France,  
Feb. 5th,  
1919.*

previous to the war frozen meat had no market in France, and there were poor refrigerating facilities, and almost no refrigerator cars. Each city has its own slaughter plants. However, the French have overcome their prejudice, and learned to appreciate American frozen beef.

Château-Thierry, Epernay, Bar-le-Duc, and all the others of dozens of destroyed towns one passes in the Marne Valley are desolate looking shell-torn sights. There is nothing interesting except to satisfy a morbid curiosity in seeing the mangled remains of these once pleasant villages. At Château-Thierry the thrifty tradespeople are already beginning to prepare, in a feeble way, for tourists who are commencing to come in the shape of a few Americans "on leave."

Michelin is publishing elaborate guide-books on the entire battle country, which are standard and will supersede the German Baedeker.

There are over one million eight hundred thousand applications on file at Washington for tourist passports, just think of it!

Lots of love, from

FERD.

## U. S. CASUAL OFFICERS' CAMP

*Angers, France, Feb. 10th, 1919.*



HERE I am, finally en route to America, and to-morrow leave for Bordeaux.

I am fortunate in being quartered in the new French artillery barracks, called the "Caserne Languoise." However, there are as yet no modern conveniences, such as electric lights and running water, and I am writing by the light of a candle. It is bitterly cold—five degrees above zero Fahrenheit—to wash out-of-doors in a gale.

Angers is a most interesting old city of eighty thousand, on the Loire, and was a most pleasant surprise in this respect, as one hears so little of it. The Loire Valley was the historical medieval center of France. Orleans, Tours, Blois, Angers, and Nantes are all on this most picturesque of rivers, which was first occupied by the Romans, and since has played so important a part in French history.

Several of my French friends have raised such a friendly protest at my returning to America *so soon* that I was compelled to say that it was only in order to be demobilized and that I would return in the

# LETTERS FROM A LIAISON OFFICER

*Angers, France,  
Feb. 10th,  
1919.*

spring! It is with a certain keen regret that I am leaving France and these hospitable friends, and the stirring scenes that have become so indelibly woven into these never-to-be-forgotten years, which have for all of us, to a greater or less degree, left their imprints on our characters and lives.

However, you *know* I am at the same time fervently hoping to again be with you and at home almost as soon as this letter arrives, and am, as ever,

Your devoted son,

FERD.



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